

MODULATION OF ACE2 EXPRESSION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides compositions and methods for modulating the expression of ACE2. In particular, this invention relates to antisense compounds, particularly oligonucleotide compounds, which, in preferred embodiments, hybridize with nucleic acid molecules encoding ACE2. Such compounds are shown herein to modulate the expression of ACE2.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In addition to its role in cardiovascular physiology, ACE2 is a receptor for the coronavirus linked to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (Dimitrov, *Cell*, **2003**, 115, 652-653; Li et al., *Nature*, **2003**, 426, 450-454; Peiris et al., *N. Engl. J. Med.*, **2003**, 349, 2431-2441; Xiao et al., *Biochem. Biophys. Res. Commun.*, **2003**, 312, 1159-1164).

Screening the EST database for potential zinc metallopeptidases identified an angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE)-related protein that was then cloned from a human lymphoma cDNA library (Tipnis et al., *J. Biol. Chem.*, **2000**, 275, 33238-33243). A ventricular tissue cDNA library from a patient with heart failure also yielded the identical ACE-related clone, which was named ACE2. Due to its similarity to the ACE of the renin-angiotensin system (RAS) which regulates blood pressure and its presence in a failing heart

tissue library, ACE2 was implicated in cardiovascular pathology, and high amounts of mRNA were apparent in heart and kidney along with testis (Donoghue et al., *Circ. Res.*, **2000**, 87, E1-9). Mouse ACE2 cDNA clones containing the sequence motif conserved among zinc metallopeptidases showed 83% identity with human ACE2 (Komatsu et al., *DNA Seq.*, **2002**, 13, 217-220).

The human ACE2 protein contains 805 amino acids, including a potential 17-amino acid N-terminal signal sequence and a hydrophobic region near the C-terminus that may be a membrane anchor (Donoghue et al., *Circ. Res.*, **2000**, 87, E1-9; Tipnis et al., *J. Biol. Chem.*, **2000**, 275, 33238-33243). ACE2 contains a conserved zinc metallopeptidase consensus sequence and a single active-site domain, and has 40% identity to the N-domain and C-domain of somatic ACE (Turner and Hooper, *Trends Pharmacol. Sci.*, **2002**, 23, 177-183). Unlike ACE which is widely expressed, ACE2 expression is mainly limited to endothelial cells of the arteries, arterioles, and venules in the heart and kidney. ACE2 is also expressed in renal tubular epithelium as well as in intrarenal and coronary vascular smooth muscle cells (Crackower et al., *Nature*, **2002**, 417, 822-828; Donoghue et al., *Circ. Res.*, **2000**, 87, E1-9; Tipnis et al., *J. Biol. Chem.*, **2000**, 275, 33238-33243). Quantitative mRNA expression profiling confirmed the presence of ACE2 expression in cardiovascular and renal tissues, but also pointed to relatively high levels of transcript in the gastrointestinal system (Harmer et al., *FEBS Lett.*, **2002**, 532, 107-110). In contrast with ACE, ACE2 is insensitive to classic ACE inhibitors and does not directly hydrolyze bradykinin (Oudit et al., *Trends Cardiovasc. Med.*, **2003**, 13, 93-101; Turner et al., *Can. J. Physiol. Pharmacol.*, **2002**, 80, 346-353).

The S1 domain of spike proteins of coronaviruses, including that which causes SARS, associates with cellular receptors to mediate infection. A cell line transfected with ACE2 was rendered permissive for SARS-coronavirus (SARS-CoV) viral replication (Li et al., *Nature*, **2003**, 426, 450-454). Further studies showed that a fragment of the SARS-CoV S protein not only binds to ACE2, but also blocks S-protein mediated infection, presumably by competing for the receptor (Wong et al., *J Biol Chem*, **2004**, 279, 3197-3201). In fact, discovery of ACE2 as a receptor for SARS-Co-V occurred when immunoprecipitation with a domain of a SARS S1 protein yielded fragments of ACE2 from the African monkey kidney cell line Vero E6 that is permissive to SARS-CoV replication. Furthermore, an anti-ACE2 antibody was able to inhibit viral replication on Vero E6 cells, demonstrating that disrupting ACE2 blocks infection (Li et al., *Nature*, **2003**, 426, 450-454).

The membrane localization of ACE2 is appropriate for a receptor for SARS-CoV. Furthermore, the tissue distribution of ACE2 is consistent with the pathology of SARS, since virus has been found in the kidney, and active replication in the small and large intestine has been observed (Li et al., *Nature*, **2003**, 426, 450-454).

SARS has been called the first pandemic of the 21st century. Just months after it emerged in mainland China, it had affected more than 8000 patients, causing 774 deaths in 26 countries on five continents. SARS has affected persons of all age groups, with a slight predominance of female patients. The route of transmission appears to be through direct or indirect contact of mucous membrane (eyes, nose, or mouth) with infectious respiratory droplets (Peiris et al., *N. Engl. J. Med.*, **2003**, 349, 2431-2441).

In accord with its similarity to the classical ACE of

the RAS pathway, ACE2 appears to be a critical regulator of heart function. The gene for the enzyme ACE2 maps to a defined quantitative trait locus on the X chromosome in several rat models of hypertension without a known candidate gene (Crackower et al., *Nature*, **2002**, 417, 822-828). The location of the ACE2 gene on the X chromosome implies that gender differences in the RAS and cardiovascular physiology may be linked to the ACE2 gene (Oudit et al., *Trends Cardiovasc. Med.*, **2003**, 13, 93-101).

A number of antibodies, peptides and small compounds have been found to bind to ACE2, and in some cases, inhibit its ability to hydrolyze substrates (Dales et al., *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, **2002**, 124, 11852-11853; Huang et al., *J. Biol. Chem.*, **2003**, 278, 15532-15540). To date, studies using these substances to block SARS infection have not been reported.

Consequently, there remains an urgent need for agents capable of treating or preventing coronavirus infections.

The US patents 6,194,556 and 6,610,497 disclose and claim a nucleic acid molecule of at least 20 nucleotides in length which hybridizes to a nucleic acid having a nucleotide sequence corresponding to ACE2. Also disclosed are primers, probes, antisense, or ribozyme molecules, in addition to ACE-2 antagonists including a nucleic acid encoding a dominant negative form of ACE-2 polypeptide (Acton and Robison, **2001**; Acton et al., **2003**).

Disclosed and claimed in the PCT Publication WO 02/12471 are an isolated nucleic acid sequence which is at least about 70% identical to the entire disclosed nucleotide sequence of ACE2. Also disclosed are antisense or ribozyme molecules that specifically modulate biological activity by acting as an agonist or antagonist of human ACE2 expression. The document discloses PNAs for therapeutic and diagnostic applications (Acton et al., **2002**).

Antisense technology is an effective means for reducing the expression of specific gene products and may therefore prove to be uniquely useful in a number of therapeutic, diagnostic, and research applications for the modulation of ACE2 expression.

The present invention provides compositions and methods for modulating ACE2 expression.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to antisense compounds, especially nucleic acid and nucleic acid-like oligomers, which are targeted to a nucleic acid encoding ACE2, and which modulate the expression of ACE2. Pharmaceutical and other compositions comprising the compounds of the invention are also provided. Further provided are methods of screening for modulators of ACE2 and methods of modulating the expression of ACE2 in cells, tissues or animals comprising contacting said cells, tissues or animals with one or more of the compounds or compositions of the invention. Methods of treating an animal, particularly a human, suspected of having or being prone to a disease or condition associated with expression of ACE2 are also set forth herein. Such methods comprise administering a therapeutically or prophylactically effective amount of one or more of the compounds or compositions of the invention to the person in need of treatment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

A. Overview of the Invention

The present invention employs antisense compounds, preferably oligonucleotides and similar species for use in modulating the function or effect of nucleic acid molecules encoding ACE2. This is accomplished by providing

oligonucleotides which specifically hybridize with one or more nucleic acid molecules encoding ACE2. As used herein, the terms "target nucleic acid" and "nucleic acid molecule encoding ACE2" have been used for convenience to encompass DNA encoding ACE2, RNA (including pre-mRNA and mRNA or portions thereof) transcribed from such DNA, and also cDNA derived from such RNA. The hybridization of a compound of this invention with its target nucleic acid is generally referred to as "antisense". Consequently, the preferred mechanism believed to be included in the practice of some preferred embodiments of the invention is referred to herein as "antisense inhibition." Such antisense inhibition is typically based upon hydrogen bonding-based hybridization of oligonucleotide strands or segments such that at least one strand or segment is cleaved, degraded, or otherwise rendered inoperable. In this regard, it is presently preferred to target specific nucleic acid molecules and their functions for such antisense inhibition.

The functions of DNA to be interfered with can include replication and transcription. Replication and transcription, for example, can be from an endogenous cellular template, a vector, a plasmid construct or otherwise. The functions of RNA to be interfered with can include functions such as translocation of the RNA to a site of protein translation, translocation of the RNA to sites within the cell which are distant from the site of RNA synthesis, translation of protein from the RNA, splicing of the RNA to yield one or more RNA species, and catalytic activity or complex formation involving the RNA which may be engaged in or facilitated by the RNA. One preferred result of such interference with target nucleic acid function is modulation of the expression of ACE2. In the context of the present invention, "modulation" and "modulation of

expression" mean either an increase (stimulation) or a decrease (inhibition) in the amount or levels of a nucleic acid molecule encoding the gene, e.g., DNA or RNA. Inhibition is often the preferred form of modulation of expression and mRNA is often a preferred target nucleic acid.

In the context of this invention, "hybridization" means the pairing of complementary strands of oligomeric compounds. In the present invention, the preferred mechanism of pairing involves hydrogen bonding, which may be Watson-Crick, Hoogsteen or reversed Hoogsteen hydrogen bonding, between complementary nucleoside or nucleotide bases (nucleobases) of the strands of oligomeric compounds. For example, adenine and thymine are complementary nucleobases which pair through the formation of hydrogen bonds. Hybridization can occur under varying circumstances.

An antisense compound is specifically hybridizable when binding of the compound to the target nucleic acid interferes with the normal function of the target nucleic acid to cause a loss of activity, and there is a sufficient degree of complementarity to avoid non-specific binding of the antisense compound to non-target nucleic acid sequences under conditions in which specific binding is desired, i.e., under physiological conditions in the case of *in vivo* assays or therapeutic treatment, and under conditions in which assays are performed in the case of *in vitro* assays.

In the present invention the phrase "stringent hybridization conditions" or "stringent conditions" refers to conditions under which a compound of the invention will hybridize to its target sequence, but to a minimal number of other sequences. Stringent conditions are sequence-dependent and will be different in different circumstances and in the context of this invention, "stringent conditions" under which oligomeric compounds hybridize to a target sequence are

determined by the nature and composition of the oligomeric compounds and the assays in which they are being investigated.

"Complementary," as used herein, refers to the capacity for precise pairing between two nucleobases of an oligomeric compound. For example, if a nucleobase at a certain position of an oligonucleotide (an oligomeric compound), is capable of hydrogen bonding with a nucleobase at a certain position of a target nucleic acid, said target nucleic acid being a DNA, RNA, or oligonucleotide molecule, then the position of hydrogen bonding between the oligonucleotide and the target nucleic acid is considered to be a complementary position. The oligonucleotide and the further DNA, RNA, or oligonucleotide molecule are complementary to each other when a sufficient number of complementary positions in each molecule are occupied by nucleobases which can hydrogen bond with each other. Thus, "specifically hybridizable" and "complementary" are terms which are used to indicate a sufficient degree of precise pairing or complementarity over a sufficient number of nucleobases such that stable and specific binding occurs between the oligonucleotide and a target nucleic acid.

It is understood in the art that the sequence of an antisense compound need not be 100% complementary to that of its target nucleic acid to be specifically hybridizable. Moreover, an oligonucleotide may hybridize over one or more segments such that intervening or adjacent segments are not involved in the hybridization event (e.g., a loop structure or hairpin structure). It is preferred that the antisense compounds of the present invention comprise at least 70%, or at least 75%, or at least 80%, or at least 85% sequence complementarity to a target region within the target nucleic acid, more preferably that they comprise at least 90%

sequence complementarity and even more preferably comprise at least 95% or at least 99% sequence complementarity to the target region within the target nucleic acid sequence to which they are targeted. For example, an antisense compound in which 18 of 20 nucleobases of the antisense compound are complementary to a target region, and would therefore specifically hybridize, would represent 90 percent complementarity. In this example, the remaining noncomplementary nucleobases may be clustered or interspersed with complementary nucleobases and need not be contiguous to each other or to complementary nucleobases. As such, an antisense compound which is 18 nucleobases in length having 4 (four) noncomplementary nucleobases which are flanked by two regions of complete complementarity with the target nucleic acid would have 77.8% overall complementarity with the target nucleic acid and would thus fall within the scope of the present invention. Percent complementarity of an antisense compound with a region of a target nucleic acid can be determined routinely using BLAST programs (basic local alignment search tools) and PowerBLAST programs known in the art (Altschul et al., *J. Mol. Biol.*, **1990**, 215, 403-410; Zhang and Madden, *Genome Res.*, **1997**, 7, 649-656).

Percent homology, sequence identity or complementarity, can be determined by, for example, the Gap program (Wisconsin Sequence Analysis Package, Version 8 for Unix, Genetics Computer Group, University Research Park, Madison WI), using default settings, which uses the algorithm of Smith and Waterman (*Adv. Appl. Math.*, 1981, 2, 482-489). In some preferred embodiments, homology, sequence identity or complementarity, between the oligomeric and target is between about 50% to about 60%. In some embodiments, homology, sequence identity or complementarity, is between about 60% to about 70%. In preferred embodiments, homology, sequence

identity or complementarity, is between about 70% and about 80%. In more preferred embodiments, homology, sequence identity or complementarity, is between about 80% and about 90%. In some preferred embodiments, homology, sequence identity or complementarity, is about 90%, about 92%, about 94%, about 95%, about 96%, about 97%, about 98%, about 99% or about 100%.

B. Compounds of the Invention

According to the present invention, antisense compounds include antisense oligomeric compounds, antisense oligonucleotides, ribozymes, external guide sequence (EGS) oligonucleotides, alternate splicers, primers, probes, and other oligomeric compounds which hybridize to at least a portion of the target nucleic acid. As such, these compounds may be introduced in the form of single-stranded, double-stranded, circular or hairpin oligomeric compounds and may contain structural elements such as internal or terminal bulges or loops. Once introduced to a system, the compounds of the invention may elicit the action of one or more enzymes or structural proteins to effect modification of the target nucleic acid.

One non-limiting example of such an enzyme is RNase H, a cellular endonuclease which cleaves the RNA strand of an RNA:DNA duplex. It is known in the art that single-stranded antisense compounds which are "DNA-like" elicit RNase H. Activation of RNase H, therefore, results in cleavage of the RNA target, thereby greatly enhancing the efficiency of oligonucleotide-mediated inhibition of gene expression. Similar roles have been postulated for other ribonucleases such as those in the RNase III and ribonuclease L family of enzymes.

While the preferred form of antisense compound is a single-stranded antisense oligonucleotide, in many species the introduction of double-stranded structures, such as double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) molecules, has been shown to induce potent and specific antisense-mediated reduction of the function of a gene or its associated gene products. This phenomenon occurs in both plants and animals and is believed to have an evolutionary connection to viral defense and transposon silencing.

The first evidence that dsRNA could lead to gene silencing in animals came in 1995 from work in the nematode, *Caenorhabditis elegans* (Guo and Kempheus, *Cell*, **1995**, 81, 611-620). Montgomery et al. have shown that the primary interference effects of dsRNA are posttranscriptional (Montgomery et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, **1998**, 95, 15502-15507). The posttranscriptional antisense mechanism defined in *Caenorhabditis elegans* resulting from exposure to double-stranded RNA (dsRNA) has since been designated RNA interference (RNAi). This term has been generalized to mean antisense-mediated gene silencing involving the introduction of dsRNA leading to the sequence-specific reduction of endogenous targeted mRNA levels (Fire et al., *Nature*, **1998**, 391, 806-811). Recently, it has been shown that it is, in fact, the single-stranded RNA oligomers of antisense polarity of the dsRNAs which are the potent inducers of RNAi (Tijsterman et al., *Science*, **2002**, 295, 694-697).

The antisense compounds of the present invention also include modified compounds in which a different base is present at one or more of the nucleotide positions in the compound. For example, if the first nucleotide is an adenosine, modified compounds may be produced which contain thymidine, guanosine or cytidine at this position. This may be done at any of the positions of the antisense compound.

These compounds are then tested using the methods described herein to determine their ability to inhibit expression of ACE2 mRNA.

In the context of this invention, the term "oligomeric compound" refers to a polymer or oligomer comprising a plurality of monomeric units. In the context of this invention, the term "oligonucleotide" refers to an oligomer or polymer of ribonucleic acid (RNA) or deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) or mimetics, chimeras, analogs and homologs thereof. This term includes oligonucleotides composed of naturally occurring nucleobases, sugars and covalent internucleoside (backbone) linkages as well as oligonucleotides having non-naturally occurring portions which function similarly. Such modified or substituted oligonucleotides are often preferred over native forms because of desirable properties such as, for example, enhanced cellular uptake, enhanced affinity for a target nucleic acid and increased stability in the presence of nucleases.

While oligonucleotides are a preferred form of the antisense compounds of this invention, the present invention comprehends other families of antisense compounds as well, including but not limited to oligonucleotide analogs and mimetics such as those described herein.

The antisense compounds in accordance with this invention preferably comprise from about 8 to about 80 nucleobases (i.e. from about 8 to about 80 linked nucleosides). One of ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the invention embodies compounds of 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70,

71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, or 80 nucleobases in length.

In one preferred embodiment, the antisense compounds of the invention are 12 to 50 nucleobases in length. One having ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that this embodies compounds of 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, or 50 nucleobases in length.

In another preferred embodiment, the antisense compounds of the invention are 15 to 30 nucleobases in length. One having ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that this embodies compounds of 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, or 30 nucleobases in length.

Particularly preferred compounds are oligonucleotides from about 12 to about 50 nucleobases, even more preferably those comprising from about 15 to about 30 nucleobases.

Antisense compounds 8-80 nucleobases in length comprising a stretch of at least eight (8) consecutive nucleobases selected from within the illustrative antisense compounds are considered to be suitable antisense compounds as well.

Exemplary preferred antisense compounds include oligonucleotide sequences that comprise at least the 8 consecutive nucleobases from the 5'-terminus of one of the illustrative preferred antisense compounds (the remaining nucleobases being a consecutive stretch of the same oligonucleotide beginning immediately upstream of the 5'-terminus of the antisense compound which is specifically hybridizable to the target nucleic acid and continuing until the oligonucleotide contains about 8 to about 80 nucleobases). Similarly preferred antisense compounds are represented by oligonucleotide sequences that comprise at

least the 8 consecutive nucleobases from the 3'-terminus of one of the illustrative preferred antisense compounds (the remaining nucleobases being a consecutive stretch of the same oligonucleotide beginning immediately downstream of the 3'-terminus of the antisense compound which is specifically hybridizable to the target nucleic acid and continuing until the oligonucleotide contains about 8 to about 80 nucleobases). It is also understood that preferred antisense compounds may be represented by oligonucleotide sequences that comprise at least 8 consecutive nucleobases from an internal portion of the sequence of an illustrative preferred antisense compound, and may extend in either or both directions until the oligonucleotide contains about 8 to about 80 nucleobases.

One having skill in the art armed with the preferred antisense compounds illustrated herein will be able, without undue experimentation, to identify further preferred antisense compounds.

C. Targets of the Invention

"Targeting" an antisense compound to a particular nucleic acid molecule, in the context of this invention, can be a multistep process. The process usually begins with the identification of a target nucleic acid whose function is to be modulated. This target nucleic acid may be, for example, a cellular gene (or mRNA transcribed from the gene) whose expression is associated with a particular disorder or disease state, or a nucleic acid molecule from an infectious agent. In the present invention, the target nucleic acid encodes ACE2.

The targeting process usually also includes determination of at least one target region, segment, or site within the target nucleic acid for the antisense interaction

to occur such that the desired effect, e.g., modulation of expression, will result. Within the context of the present invention, the term "region" is defined as a portion of the target nucleic acid having at least one identifiable structure, function, or characteristic. Within regions of target nucleic acids are segments. "Segments" are defined as smaller or sub-portions of regions within a target nucleic acid. "Sites," as used in the present invention, are defined as positions within a target nucleic acid.

Since, as is known in the art, the translation initiation codon is typically 5'-AUG (in transcribed mRNA molecules; 5'-ATG in the corresponding DNA molecule), the translation initiation codon is also referred to as the "AUG codon," the "start codon" or the "AUG start codon". A minority of genes have a translation initiation codon having the RNA sequence 5'-GUG, 5'-UUG or 5'-CUG, and 5'-AUA, 5'-ACG and 5'-CUG have been shown to function *in vivo*. Thus, the terms "translation initiation codon" and "start codon" can encompass many codon sequences, even though the initiator amino acid in each instance is typically methionine (in eukaryotes) or formylmethionine (in prokaryotes). It is also known in the art that eukaryotic and prokaryotic genes may have two or more alternative start codons, any one of which may be preferentially utilized for translation initiation in a particular cell type or tissue, or under a particular set of conditions. In the context of the invention, "start codon" and "translation initiation codon" refer to the codon or codons that are used *in vivo* to initiate translation of an mRNA transcribed from a gene encoding ACE2, regardless of the sequence(s) of such codons. It is also known in the art that a translation termination codon (or "stop codon") of a gene may have one of three sequences, i.e., 5'-UAA, 5'-UAG and 5'-UGA (the corresponding DNA sequences are 5'-TAA, 5'-TAG

and 5'-TGA, respectively).

The terms "start codon region" and "translation initiation codon region" refer to a portion of such an mRNA or gene that encompasses from about 25 to about 50 contiguous nucleotides in either direction (i.e., 5' or 3') from a translation initiation codon. Similarly, the terms "stop codon region" and "translation termination codon region" refer to a portion of such an mRNA or gene that encompasses from about 25 to about 50 contiguous nucleotides in either direction (i.e., 5' or 3') from a translation termination codon. Consequently, the "start codon region" (or "translation initiation codon region") and the "stop codon region" (or "translation termination codon region") are all regions which may be targeted effectively with the antisense compounds of the present invention.

The open reading frame (ORF) or "coding region," which is known in the art to refer to the region between the translation initiation codon and the translation termination codon, is also a region which may be targeted effectively. Within the context of the present invention, a preferred region is the intragenic region encompassing the translation initiation or termination codon of the open reading frame (ORF) of a gene.

Other target regions include the 5' untranslated region (5'UTR), known in the art to refer to the portion of an mRNA in the 5' direction from the translation initiation codon, and thus including nucleotides between the 5' cap site and the translation initiation codon of an mRNA (or corresponding nucleotides on the gene), and the 3' untranslated region (3'UTR), known in the art to refer to the portion of an mRNA in the 3' direction from the translation termination codon, and thus including nucleotides between the translation termination codon and 3' end of an mRNA (or corresponding

nucleotides on the gene). The 5' cap site of an mRNA comprises an N7-methylated guanosine residue joined to the 5'-most residue of the mRNA via a 5'-5' triphosphate linkage. The 5' cap region of an mRNA is considered to include the 5' cap structure itself as well as the first 50 nucleotides adjacent to the cap site. It is also preferred to target the 5' cap region.

Although some eukaryotic mRNA transcripts are directly translated, many contain one or more regions, known as "introns," which are excised from a transcript before it is translated. The remaining (and therefore translated) regions are known as "exons" and are spliced together to form a continuous mRNA sequence. Targeting splice sites, i.e., intron-exon junctions or exon-intron junctions, may also be particularly useful in situations where aberrant splicing is implicated in disease, or where an overproduction of a particular splice product is implicated in disease. Aberrant fusion junctions due to rearrangements or deletions are also preferred target sites. mRNA transcripts produced via the process of splicing of two (or more) mRNAs from different gene sources are known as "fusion transcripts". It is also known that introns can be effectively targeted using antisense compounds targeted to, for example, DNA or pre-mRNA.

It is also known in the art that alternative RNA transcripts can be produced from the same genomic region of DNA. These alternative transcripts are generally known as "variants". More specifically, "pre-mRNA variants" are transcripts produced from the same genomic DNA that differ from other transcripts produced from the same genomic DNA in either their start or stop position and contain both intronic and exonic sequence.

Upon excision of one or more exon or intron regions, or portions thereof during splicing, pre-mRNA variants produce smaller "mRNA variants". Consequently, mRNA variants are processed pre-mRNA variants and each unique pre-mRNA variant must always produce a unique mRNA variant as a result of splicing. These mRNA variants are also known as "alternative splice variants". If no splicing of the pre-mRNA variant occurs then the pre-mRNA variant is identical to the mRNA variant.

It is also known in the art that variants can be produced through the use of alternative signals to start or stop transcription and that pre-mRNAs and mRNAs can possess more than one start codon or stop codon. Variants that originate from a pre-mRNA or mRNA that use alternative start codons are known as "alternative start variants" of that pre-mRNA or mRNA. Those transcripts that use an alternative stop codon are known as "alternative stop variants" of that pre-mRNA or mRNA. One specific type of alternative stop variant is the "polyA variant" in which the multiple transcripts produced result from the alternative selection of one of the "polyA stop signals" by the transcription machinery, thereby producing transcripts that terminate at unique polyA sites. Within the context of the invention, the types of variants described herein are also preferred target nucleic acids.

The locations on the target nucleic acid to which the preferred antisense compounds hybridize are hereinbelow referred to as "preferred target segments." As used herein the term "preferred target segment" is defined as at least an 8-nucleobase portion of a target region to which an active antisense compound is targeted. While not wishing to be bound by theory, it is presently believed that these target segments represent portions of the target nucleic acid which are accessible for hybridization.

While the specific sequences of certain preferred target segments are set forth herein, one of skill in the art will recognize that these serve to illustrate and describe particular embodiments within the scope of the present invention. Additional preferred target segments may be identified by one having ordinary skill.

Target segments 8-80 nucleobases in length comprising a stretch of at least eight (8) consecutive nucleobases selected from within the illustrative preferred target segments are considered to be suitable for targeting as well.

Target segments can include DNA or RNA sequences that comprise at least the 8 consecutive nucleobases from the 5'-terminus of one of the illustrative preferred target segments (the remaining nucleobases being a consecutive stretch of the same DNA or RNA beginning immediately upstream of the 5'-terminus of the target segment and continuing until the DNA or RNA contains about 8 to about 80 nucleobases). Similarly preferred target segments are represented by DNA or RNA sequences that comprise at least the 8 consecutive nucleobases from the 3'-terminus of one of the illustrative preferred target segments (the remaining nucleobases being a consecutive stretch of the same DNA or RNA beginning immediately downstream of the 3'-terminus of the target segment and continuing until the DNA or RNA contains about 8 to about 80 nucleobases). It is also understood that preferred antisense target segments may be represented by DNA or RNA sequences that comprise at least 8 consecutive nucleobases from an internal portion of the sequence of an illustrative preferred target segment, and may extend in either or both directions until the oligonucleotide contains about 8 to about 80 nucleobases. One having skill in the art armed with the preferred target segments illustrated herein will be able, without undue experimentation, to identify

further preferred target segments.

Once one or more target regions, segments or sites have been identified, antisense compounds are chosen which are sufficiently complementary to the target, i.e., hybridize sufficiently well and with sufficient specificity, to give the desired effect.

The oligomeric antisense compounds may also be targeted to regions of the target nucleobase sequence (e.g., such as those disclosed in Example 13) comprising nucleobases 1-80, 81-160, 161-240, 241-320, 321-400, 401-480, 481-560, 561-640, 641-720, 721-800, 801-880, 881-960, 961-1040, 1041-1120, 1121-1200, 1201-1280, 1281-1360, 1361-1440, 1441-1520, 1521-1600, 1601-1680, 1681-1760, 1761-1840, 1841-1920, 1921-2000, 2001-2080, 2081-2160, 2161-2240, 2241-2320, 2321-2400, 2401-2480, 2481-2560, 2561-2640, 2641-2720, 2721-2800, 2801-2880, 2881-2960, 2961-3040, 3041-3120, 3121-3200, 3201-3280, 3281-3360, 3361-3405, or any combination thereof.

D. Screening and Target Validation

In a further embodiment, the "preferred target segments" identified herein may be employed in a screen for additional compounds that modulate the expression of ACE2. "Modulators" are those compounds that decrease or increase the expression of a nucleic acid molecule encoding ACE2 and which comprise at least an 8-nucleobase portion which is complementary to a preferred target segment. The screening method comprises the steps of contacting a preferred target segment of a nucleic acid molecule encoding ACE2 with one or more candidate modulators, and selecting for one or more candidate modulators which decrease or increase the expression of a nucleic acid molecule encoding ACE2. Once it is shown that the candidate modulator or modulators are capable of modulating (e.g. either decreasing or increasing)

the expression of a nucleic acid molecule encoding ACE2, the modulator may then be employed in further investigative studies of the function of ACE2, or for use as a research, diagnostic, or therapeutic agent in accordance with the present invention.

The preferred target segments of the present invention may be also be combined with their respective complementary antisense compounds of the present invention to form stabilized double-stranded (duplexed) oligonucleotides.

Such double stranded oligonucleotide moieties have been shown in the art to modulate target expression and regulate translation as well as RNA processing via an antisense mechanism. Moreover, the double-stranded moieties may be subject to chemical modifications (Fire et al., *Nature*, **1998**, 391, 806-811; Timmons and Fire, *Nature* **1998**, 395, 854; Timmons et al., *Gene*, **2001**, 263, 103-112; Tabara et al., *Science*, **1998**, 282, 430-431; Montgomery et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA*, **1998**, 95, 15502-15507; Tuschl et al., *Genes Dev.*, **1999**, 13, 3191-3197; Elbashir et al., *Nature*, **2001**, 411, 494-498; Elbashir et al., *Genes Dev.* **2001**, 15, 188-200). For example, such double-stranded moieties have been shown to inhibit the target by the classical hybridization of antisense strand of the duplex to the target, thereby triggering enzymatic degradation of the target (Tijsterman et al., *Science*, **2002**, 295, 694-697).

The antisense compounds of the present invention can also be applied in the areas of drug discovery and target validation. The present invention comprehends the use of the compounds and preferred target segments identified herein in drug discovery efforts to elucidate relationships that exist between ACE2 and a disease state, phenotype, or condition. These methods include detecting or modulating ACE2 comprising contacting a sample, tissue, cell, or organism with the

compounds of the present invention, measuring the nucleic acid or protein level of ACE2 and/or a related phenotypic or chemical endpoint at some time after treatment, and optionally comparing the measured value to a non-treated sample or sample treated with a further compound of the invention. These methods can also be performed in parallel or in combination with other experiments to determine the function of unknown genes for the process of target validation or to determine the validity of a particular gene product as a target for treatment or prevention of a particular disease, condition, or phenotype.

E. Kits, Research Reagents, Diagnostics, and Therapeutics

The antisense compounds of the present invention can be utilized for diagnostics, therapeutics, prophylaxis and as research reagents and kits. Furthermore, antisense oligonucleotides, which are able to inhibit gene expression with exquisite specificity, are often used by those of ordinary skill to elucidate the function of particular genes or to distinguish between functions of various members of a biological pathway.

For use in kits and diagnostics, the compounds of the present invention, either alone or in combination with other compounds or therapeutics, can be used as tools in differential and/or combinatorial analyses to elucidate expression patterns of a portion or the entire complement of genes expressed within cells and tissues.

As one nonlimiting example, expression patterns within cells or tissues treated with one or more antisense compounds are compared to control cells or tissues not treated with antisense compounds and the patterns produced are analyzed for differential levels of gene expression as they pertain, for example, to disease association, signaling pathway,

cellular localization, expression level, size, structure or function of the genes examined. These analyses can be performed on stimulated or unstimulated cells and in the presence or absence of other compounds which affect expression patterns.

Examples of methods of gene expression analysis known in the art include DNA arrays or microarrays (Brazma and Vilo, *FEBS Lett.*, **2000**, 480, 17-24; Celis, et al., *FEBS Lett.*, **2000**, 480, 2-16), SAGE (serial analysis of gene expression) (Madden, et al., *Drug Discov. Today*, **2000**, 5, 415-425), READS (restriction enzyme amplification of digested cDNAs) (Prashar and Weissman, *Methods Enzymol.*, **1999**, 303, 258-72), TOGA (total gene expression analysis) (Sutcliffe, et al., *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.*, **2000**, 97, 1976-81), protein arrays and proteomics (Celis, et al., *FEBS Lett.*, **2000**, 480, 2-16; Jungblut, et al., *Electrophoresis*, **1999**, 20, 2100-10), expressed sequence tag (EST) sequencing (Celis, et al., *FEBS Lett.*, **2000**, 480, 2-16; Larsson, et al., *J. Biotechnol.*, **2000**, 80, 143-57), subtractive RNA fingerprinting (SuRF) (Fuchs, et al., *Anal. Biochem.*, **2000**, 286, 91-98; Larson, et al., *Cytometry*, **2000**, 41, 203-208), subtractive cloning, differential display (DD) (Jurecic and Belmont, *Curr. Opin. Microbiol.*, **2000**, 3, 316-21), comparative genomic hybridization (Carulli, et al., *J. Cell Biochem. Suppl.*, **1998**, 31, 286-96), FISH (fluorescent in situ hybridization) techniques (Going and Gusterson, *Eur. J. Cancer*, **1999**, 35, 1895-904) and mass spectrometry methods (To, *Comb. Chem. High Throughput Screen*, **2000**, 3, 235-41).

The antisense compounds of the invention are useful for research and diagnostics, because these compounds hybridize to nucleic acids encoding ACE2. For example, oligonucleotides that are shown to hybridize with such efficiency and under such conditions as disclosed herein as to be effective ACE2

inhibitors will also be effective primers or probes under conditions favoring gene amplification or detection, respectively. These primers and probes are useful in methods requiring the specific detection of nucleic acid molecules encoding ACE2 and in the amplification of said nucleic acid molecules for detection or for use in further studies of ACE2. Hybridization of the antisense oligonucleotides, particularly the primers and probes, of the invention with a nucleic acid encoding ACE2 can be detected by means known in the art. Such means may include conjugation of an enzyme to the oligonucleotide, radiolabelling of the oligonucleotide or any other suitable detection means. Kits using such detection means for detecting the level of ACE2 in a sample may also be prepared.

The specificity and sensitivity of antisense is also harnessed by those of skill in the art for therapeutic uses. Antisense compounds have been employed as therapeutic moieties in the treatment of disease states in animals, including humans. Antisense oligonucleotide drugs, including ribozymes, have been safely and effectively administered to humans and numerous clinical trials are presently underway. It is thus established that antisense compounds can be useful therapeutic modalities that can be configured to be useful in treatment regimes for the treatment of cells, tissues and animals, especially humans.

For therapeutics, an animal, preferably a human, suspected of having a disease or disorder which can be treated by modulating the expression of ACE2 is treated by administering antisense compounds in accordance with this invention. For example, in one non-limiting embodiment, the methods comprise the step of administering to the animal in need of treatment, a therapeutically effective amount of a ACE2 inhibitor. The ACE2 inhibitors of the present invention

effectively inhibit the activity of the ACE2 protein or inhibit the expression of the ACE2 protein. In one embodiment, the activity or expression of ACE2 in an animal is inhibited by about 10%. Preferably, the activity or expression of ACE2 in an animal is inhibited by about 30%. More preferably, the activity or expression of ACE2 in an animal is inhibited by 50% or more. Thus, the oligomeric antisense compounds modulate expression of ACE2 mRNA by at least 10%, by at least 20%, by at least 25%, by at least 30%, by at least 40%, by at least 50%, by at least 60%, by at least 70%, by at least 75%, by at least 80%, by at least 85%, by at least 90%, by at least 95%, by at least 98%, by at least 99%, or by 100%.

For example, the reduction of the expression of ACE2 may be measured in serum, adipose tissue, liver or any other body fluid, tissue or organ of the animal. Preferably, the cells contained within said fluids, tissues or organs being analyzed contain a nucleic acid molecule encoding ACE2 protein and/or the ACE2 protein itself.

The antisense compounds of the invention can be utilized in pharmaceutical compositions by adding an effective amount of a compound to a suitable pharmaceutically acceptable diluent or carrier. Use of the compounds and methods of the invention may also be useful prophylactically.

F. Modifications

As is known in the art, a nucleoside is a base-sugar combination. The base portion of the nucleoside is normally a heterocyclic base sometimes referred to as a "nucleobase" or simply a "base". The two most common classes of such heterocyclic bases are the purines and the pyrimidines. Nucleotides are nucleosides that further include a phosphate group covalently linked to the sugar portion of the

nucleoside. For those nucleosides that include a pentofuranosyl sugar, the phosphate group can be linked to either the 2', 3' or 5' hydroxyl moiety of the sugar. In forming oligonucleotides, the phosphate groups covalently link adjacent nucleosides to one another to form a linear polymeric compound. In turn, the respective ends of this linear polymeric compound can be further joined to form a circular compound, however, linear compounds are generally preferred. In addition, linear compounds may have internal nucleobase complementarity and may therefore fold in a manner as to produce a fully or partially double-stranded compound. Within oligonucleotides, the phosphate groups are commonly referred to as forming the internucleoside backbone of the oligonucleotide. The normal linkage or backbone of RNA and DNA is a 3' to 5' phosphodiester linkage.

Modified Internucleoside Linkages (Backbones)

Specific examples of preferred antisense compounds useful in this invention include oligonucleotides containing modified backbones or non-natural internucleoside linkages. As defined in this specification, oligonucleotides having modified backbones include those that retain a phosphorus atom in the backbone and those that do not have a phosphorus atom in the backbone. For the purposes of this specification, and as sometimes referenced in the art, modified oligonucleotides that do not have a phosphorus atom in their internucleoside backbone can also be considered to be oligonucleosides.

Preferred modified oligonucleotide backbones containing a phosphorus atom therein include, for example, phosphorothioates, chiral phosphorothioates, phosphorodithioates, phosphotriesters, aminoalkylphosphotriaminoalkylphosphotriesters, methyl and other alkyl

phosphonates including 3'-alkylene phosphonates, 5'-alkylene phosphonates and chiral phosphonates, phosphinates, phosphoramidates including 3'-amino phosphoramidate and aminoalkylphosphoramidates, thionophosphoramidates, thionoalkylphosphonates, thionoalkylphosphotriesters, selenophosphates and boranophosphates having normal 3'-5' linkages, 2'-5' linked analogs of these, and those having inverted polarity wherein one or more internucleotide linkages is a 3' to 3', 5' to 5' or 2' to 2' linkage. Preferred oligonucleotides having inverted polarity comprise a single 3' to 3' linkage at the 3'-most internucleotide linkage i.e. a single inverted nucleoside residue which may be abasic (the nucleobase is missing or has a hydroxyl group in place thereof). Various salts, mixed salts and free acid forms are also included.

Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of the above phosphorus-containing linkages include, but are not limited to, U.S.: 3,687,808; 4,469,863; 4,476,301; 5,023,243; 5,177,196; 5,188,897; 5,264,423; 5,276,019; 5,278,302; 5,286,717; 5,321,131; 5,399,676; 5,405,939; 5,453,496; 5,455,233; 5,466,677; 5,476,925; 5,519,126; 5,536,821; 5,541,306; 5,550,111; 5,563,253; 5,571,799; 5,587,361; 5,194,599; 5,565,555; 5,527,899; 5,721,218; 5,672,697 and 5,625,050, certain of which are commonly owned with this application, and each of which is herein incorporated by reference.

Preferred modified oligonucleotide backbones that do not include a phosphorus atom therein have backbones that are formed by short chain alkyl or cycloalkyl internucleoside linkages, mixed heteroatom and alkyl or cycloalkyl internucleoside linkages, or one or more short chain heteroatomic or heterocyclic internucleoside linkages. These include those having morpholino linkages (formed in part from

the sugar portion of a nucleoside); siloxane backbones; sulfide, sulfoxide and sulfone backbones; formacetyl and thioformacetyl backbones; methylene formacetyl and thioformacetyl backbones; riboacetyl backbones; alkene containing backbones; sulfamate backbones; methyleneimino and methylenehydrazino backbones; sulfonate and sulfonamide backbones; amide backbones; and others having mixed N, O, S and CH₂ component parts.

Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of the above oligonucleosides include, but are not limited to, U.S.: 5,034,506; 5,166,315; 5,185,444; 5,214,134; 5,216,141; 5,235,033; 5,264,562; 5,264,564; 5,405,938; 5,434,257; 5,466,677; 5,470,967; 5,489,677; 5,541,307; 5,561,225; 5,596,086; 5,602,240; 5,610,289; 5,602,240; 5,608,046; 5,610,289; 5,618,704; 5,623,070; 5,663,312; 5,633,360; 5,677,437; 5,792,608; 5,646,269 and 5,677,439, certain of which are commonly owned with this application, and each of which is herein incorporated by reference.

Modified sugar and internucleoside linkages-Mimetics

In other preferred antisense compounds, e.g., oligonucleotide mimetics, both the sugar and the internucleoside linkage (i.e. the backbone), of the nucleotide units are replaced with novel groups. The nucleobase units are maintained for hybridization with an appropriate target nucleic acid. One such compound, an oligonucleotide mimetic that has been shown to have excellent hybridization properties, is referred to as a peptide nucleic acid (PNA). In PNA compounds, the sugar-backbone of an oligonucleotide is replaced with an amide containing backbone, in particular an aminoethylglycine backbone. The nucleobases are retained and are bound directly or indirectly

to aza nitrogen atoms of the amide portion of the backbone. Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of PNA compounds include, but are not limited to, U.S.: 5,539,082; 5,714,331; and 5,719,262, each of which is herein incorporated by reference. Further teaching of PNA compounds can be found in Nielsen et al., *Science*, **1991**, 254, 1497-1500.

Preferred embodiments of the invention are oligonucleotides with phosphorothioate backbones and oligonucleosides with heteroatom backbones, and in particular $-\text{CH}_2-\text{NH}-\text{O}-\text{CH}_2-$, $-\text{CH}_2-\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)-\text{O}-\text{CH}_2-$ [known as a methylene (methyylimino) or MMI backbone], $-\text{CH}_2-\text{O}-\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)-\text{CH}_2-$, $-\text{CH}_2-\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)-\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)-\text{CH}_2-$ and $-\text{O}-\text{N}(\text{CH}_3)-\text{CH}_2-\text{CH}_2-$ [wherein the native phosphodiester backbone is represented as $-\text{O}-\text{P}-\text{O}-\text{CH}_2-$] of the above referenced U.S. patent 5,489,677, and the amide backbones of the above referenced U.S. patent 5,602,240. Also preferred are oligonucleotides having morpholino backbone structures of the above-referenced U.S. patent 5,034,506.

Modified sugars

Modified antisense compounds may also contain one or more substituted sugar moieties. Preferred are antisense compounds, preferably antisense oligonucleotides, comprising one of the following at the 2' position: OH; F; O-, S-, or N-alkyl; O-, S-, or N-alkenyl; O-, S- or N-alkynyl; or O-alkyl-O-alkyl, wherein the alkyl, alkenyl and alkynyl may be substituted or unsubstituted C_1 to C_{10} alkyl or C_2 to C_{10} alkenyl and alkynyl. Particularly preferred are $\text{O}[(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{O}]_m\text{CH}_3$, $\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{OCH}_3$, $\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{NH}_2$, $\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{CH}_3$, $\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{ONH}_2$, and $\text{O}(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{ON}[(\text{CH}_2)_n\text{CH}_3]_2$, where n and m are from 1 to about 10. Other preferred oligonucleotides comprise one of the following at the 2' position: C_1 to C_{10} lower alkyl,

substituted lower alkyl, alkenyl, alkynyl, alkaryl, aralkyl, O-alkaryl or O-aralkyl, SH, SCH₃, OCN, Cl, Br, CN, CF₃, OCF₃, SOCH₃, SO₂CH₃, ONO₂, NO₂, N₃, NH₂, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkaryl, aminoalkylamino, polyalkylamino, substituted silyl, an RNA cleaving group, a reporter group, an intercalator, a group for improving the pharmacokinetic properties of an oligonucleotide, or a group for improving the pharmacodynamic properties of an oligonucleotide, and other substituents having similar properties. A preferred modification includes 2'-methoxyethoxy (2'-O-CH₂CH₂OCH₃, also known as 2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl) or 2'-MOE) (Martin et al., *Helv. Chim. Acta*, **1995**, 78, 486-504) i.e., an alkoxyalkoxy group. A further preferred modification includes 2'-dimethylaminoethoxy, i.e., a O(CH₂)₂ON(CH₃)₂ group, also known as 2'-DMAOE, as described in examples hereinbelow, and 2'-dimethylaminoethoxyethoxy (also known in the art as 2'-O-dimethyl-amino-ethoxy-ethyl or 2'-DMAEOE), i.e., 2'-O-CH₂-O-CH₂-N(CH₃)₂, also described in examples hereinbelow.

Other preferred modifications include 2'-methoxy (2'-O-CH₃), 2'-aminopropoxy (2'-OCH₂CH₂CH₂NH₂), 2'-allyl (2'-CH₂-CH=CH₂), 2'-O-allyl (2'-O-CH₂-CH=CH₂) and 2'-fluoro (2'-F). The 2'-modification may be in the arabino (up) position or ribo (down) position. A preferred 2'-arabino modification is 2'-F. Similar modifications may also be made at other positions on the oligonucleotide, particularly the 3' position of the sugar on the 3' terminal nucleotide or in 2'-5' linked oligonucleotides and the 5' position of 5' terminal nucleotide. Antisense compounds may also have sugar mimetics such as cyclobutyl moieties in place of the pentofuranosyl sugar. Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of such modified sugar structures include, but are not limited to, U.S.: 4,981,957; 5,118,800; 5,319,080; 5,359,044; 5,393,878; 5,446,137; 5,466,786; 5,514,785;

5,519,134; 5,567,811; 5,576,427; 5,591,722; 5,597,909; 5,610,300; 5,627,053; 5,639,873; 5,646,265; 5,658,873; 5,670,633; 5,792,747; and 5,700,920, certain of which are commonly owned with the instant application, and each of which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

A further preferred modification of the sugar includes Locked Nucleic Acids (LNAs) in which the 2'-hydroxyl group is linked to the 3' or 4' carbon atom of the sugar ring, thereby forming a bicyclic sugar moiety. The linkage is preferably a methylene ($-\text{CH}_2-$)_n group bridging the 2' oxygen atom and the 4' carbon atom wherein n is 1 or 2. LNAs and preparation thereof are described in WO 98/39352 and WO 99/14226.

Natural and Modified Nucleobases

Antisense compounds may also include nucleobase (often referred to in the art as heterocyclic base or simply as "base") modifications or substitutions. As used herein, "unmodified" or "natural" nucleobases include the purine bases adenine (A) and guanine (G), and the pyrimidine bases thymine (T), cytosine (C) and uracil (U). Modified nucleobases include other synthetic and natural nucleobases such as 5-methylcytosine (5-me-C), 5-hydroxymethyl cytosine, xanthine, hypoxanthine, 2-aminoadenine, 6-methyl and other alkyl derivatives of adenine and guanine, 2-propyl and other alkyl derivatives of adenine and guanine, 2-thiouracil, 2-thiothymine and 2-thiocytosine, 5-halouracil and cytosine, 5-propynyl ($-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{CH}_3$) uracil and cytosine and other alkynyl derivatives of pyrimidine bases, 6-azo uracil, cytosine and thymine, 5-uracil (pseudouracil), 4-thiouracil, 8-halo, 8-amino, 8-thiol, 8-thioalkyl, 8-hydroxyl and other 8-substituted adenines and guanines, 5-halo particularly 5-bromo, 5-trifluoromethyl and other 5-substituted uracils and cytosines, 7-methylguanine and 7-methyladenine, 2-F-adenine,

2-amino-adenine, 8-azaguanine and 8-azaadenine, 7-deazaguanine and 7-deazaadenine and 3-deazaguanine and 3-deazaadenine. Further modified nucleobases include tricyclic pyrimidines such as phenoxazine cytidine (1H-pyrimido[5,4-b][1,4]benzoxazin-2(3H)-one), phenothiazine cytidine (1H-pyrimido[5,4-b][1,4]benzothiazin-2(3H)-one), G-clamps such as a substituted phenoxazine cytidine (e.g. 9-(2-aminoethoxy)-H-pyrimido[5,4-b][1,4]benzoxazin-2(3H)-one), carbazole cytidine (2H-pyrimido[4,5-b]indol-2-one), pyridoindole cytidine (H-pyrido[3',2':4,5]pyrrolo[2,3-d]pyrimidin-2-one). Modified nucleobases may also include those in which the purine or pyrimidine base is replaced with other heterocycles, for example 7-deaza-adenine, 7-deazaguanosine, 2-aminopyridine and 2-pyridone. Further nucleobases include those disclosed in United States Patent No. 3,687,808, those disclosed in *The Concise Encyclopedia Of Polymer Science And Engineering*, pages 858-859, Kroschwitz, J.I., ed. John Wiley & Sons, 1990, those disclosed by Englisch et al., *Angewandte Chemie*, International Edition, 1991, 30, 613, and those disclosed by Sanghvi, Y.S., Chapter 15, *Antisense Research and Applications*, pages 289-302, Crooke, S.T. and Lebleu, B. , ed., CRC Press, 1993. Certain of these nucleobases are particularly useful for increasing the binding affinity of the compounds of the invention. These include 5-substituted pyrimidines, 6-azapyrimidines and N-2, N-6 and O-6 substituted purines, including 2-aminopropyladenine, 5-propynyluracil and 5-propynylcytosine. 5-methylcytosine substitutions have been shown to increase nucleic acid duplex stability by 0.6-1.2 °C and are presently preferred base substitutions, even more particularly when combined with 2'-O-methoxyethyl sugar modifications.

Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of certain of the above noted modified

nucleobases as well as other modified nucleobases include, but are not limited to, the above noted U.S. 3,687,808, as well as U.S.: 4,845,205; 5,130,302; 5,134,066; 5,175,273; 5,367,066; 5,432,272; 5,457,187; 5,459,255; 5,484,908; 5,502,177; 5,525,711; 5,552,540; 5,587,469; 5,594,121, 5,596,091; 5,614,617; 5,645,985; 5,830,653; 5,763,588; 6,005,096; and 5,681,941, certain of which are commonly owned with the instant application, and each of which is herein incorporated by reference, and United States patent 5,750,692, which is commonly owned with the instant application and also herein incorporated by reference.

Conjugates

Another modification of the antisense compounds of the invention involves chemically linking to the antisense compound one or more moieties or conjugates which enhance the activity, cellular distribution or cellular uptake of the oligonucleotide. These moieties or conjugates can include conjugate groups covalently bound to functional groups such as primary or secondary hydroxyl groups. Conjugate groups of the invention include intercalators, reporter molecules, polyamines, polyamides, polyethylene glycols, polyethers, groups that enhance the pharmacodynamic properties of oligomers, and groups that enhance the pharmacokinetic properties of oligomers. Typical conjugate groups include cholesterol, lipids, phospholipids, biotin, phenazine, folate, phenanthridine, anthraquinone, acridine, fluoresceins, rhodamines, coumarins, and dyes. Groups that enhance the pharmacodynamic properties, in the context of this invention, include groups that improve uptake, enhance resistance to degradation, and/or strengthen sequence-specific hybridization with the target nucleic acid. Groups that enhance the pharmacokinetic properties, in the context of

this invention, include groups that improve uptake, distribution, metabolism or excretion of the compounds of the present invention. Representative conjugate groups are disclosed in International Patent Application PCT/US92/09196, filed October 23, 1992, and U.S. Patent 6,287,860, the entire disclosure of which are incorporated herein by reference. Conjugate moieties include but are not limited to lipid moieties such as a cholesterol moiety, cholic acid, a thioether, e.g., hexyl-S-tritylthiol, a thiocholesterol, an aliphatic chain, e.g., dodecandiol or undecyl residues, a phospholipid, e.g., di-hexadecyl-rac-glycerol or triethyl-ammonium 1,2-di-O-hexadecyl-rac-glycero-3-H-phosphonate, a polyamine or a polyethylene glycol chain, or adamantane acetic acid, a palmityl moiety, or an octadecylamine or hexylamino-carbonyl-oxycholesterol moiety. Antisense compounds of the invention may also be conjugated to active drug substances, for example, aspirin, warfarin, phenylbutazone, ibuprofen, suprofen, fenbufen, ketoprofen, (S)-(+)-pranoprofen, carprofen, dansylsarcosine, 2,3,5-triiodobenzoic acid, flufenamic acid, folinic acid, a benzothiadiazide, chlorothiazide, a diazepine, indomethicin, a barbiturate, a cephalosporin, a sulfa drug, an antidiabetic, an antibacterial or an antibiotic. Oligonucleotide-drug conjugates and their preparation are described in United States Patent Application 09/334,130 (filed June 15, 1999) which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of such oligonucleotide conjugates include, but are not limited to, U.S.: 4,828,979; 4,948,882; 5,218,105; 5,525,465; 5,541,313; 5,545,730; 5,552,538; 5,578,717, 5,580,731; 5,580,731; 5,591,584; 5,109,124; 5,118,802; 5,138,045; 5,414,077; 5,486,603; 5,512,439; 5,578,718; 5,608,046; 4,587,044; 4,605,735; 4,667,025; 4,762,779;

4,789,737; 4,824,941; 4,835,263; 4,876,335; 4,904,582;
4,958,013; 5,082,830; 5,112,963; 5,214,136; 5,082,830;
5,112,963; 5,214,136; 5,245,022; 5,254,469; 5,258,506;
5,262,536; 5,272,250; 5,292,873; 5,317,098; 5,371,241,
5,391,723; 5,416,203, 5,451,463; 5,510,475; 5,512,667;
5,514,785; 5,565,552; 5,567,810; 5,574,142; 5,585,481;
5,587,371; 5,595,726; 5,597,696; 5,599,923; 5,599,928 and
5,688,941, certain of which are commonly owned with the
instant application, and each of which is herein incorporated
by reference.

Chimeric compounds

It is not necessary for all positions in a given compound to be uniformly modified, and in fact more than one of the aforementioned modifications may be incorporated in a single compound or even at a single nucleoside within an oligonucleotide.

The present invention also includes antisense compounds which are chimeric compounds. "Chimeric" antisense compounds or "chimeras," in the context of this invention, are antisense compounds, particularly oligonucleotides, which contain two or more chemically distinct regions, each made up of at least one monomer unit, i.e., a nucleotide in the case of an oligonucleotide compound. Chimeric antisense oligonucleotides are thus a form of antisense compound. These oligonucleotides typically contain at least one region wherein the oligonucleotide is modified so as to confer upon the oligonucleotide increased resistance to nuclease degradation, increased cellular uptake, increased stability and/or increased binding affinity for the target nucleic acid. An additional region of the oligonucleotide may serve as a substrate for enzymes capable of cleaving RNA:DNA or RNA:RNA hybrids. By way of example, RNase H is a cellular

endonuclease which cleaves the RNA strand of an RNA:DNA duplex. Activation of RNase H, therefore, results in cleavage of the RNA target, thereby greatly enhancing the efficiency of oligonucleotide-mediated inhibition of gene expression. The cleavage of RNA:RNA hybrids can, in like fashion, be accomplished through the actions of endoribonucleases, such as RNaseL which cleaves both cellular and viral RNA. Cleavage of the RNA target can be routinely detected by gel electrophoresis and, if necessary, associated nucleic acid hybridization techniques known in the art.

Chimeric antisense compounds of the invention may be formed as composite structures of two or more oligonucleotides, modified oligonucleotides, oligonucleosides and/or oligonucleotide mimetics as described above. Such compounds have also been referred to in the art as hybrids or gapmers. Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of such hybrid structures include, but are not limited to, U.S.: 5,013,830; 5,149,797; 5,220,007; 5,256,775; 5,366,878; 5,403,711; 5,491,133; 5,565,350; 5,623,065; 5,652,355; 5,652,356; and 5,700,922, certain of which are commonly owned with the instant application, and each of which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

G. Formulations

The compounds of the invention may also be admixed, encapsulated, conjugated or otherwise associated with other molecules, molecule structures or mixtures of compounds, as for example, liposomes, receptor-targeted molecules, oral, rectal, topical or other formulations, for assisting in uptake, distribution and/or absorption. Representative United States patents that teach the preparation of such uptake, distribution and/or absorption-assisting formulations include, but are not limited to, U.S.: 5,108,921; 5,354,844;

5,416,016; 5,459,127; 5,521,291; 5,543,158; 5,547,932; 5,583,020; 5,591,721; 4,426,330; 4,534,899; 5,013,556; 5,108,921; 5,213,804; 5,227,170; 5,264,221; 5,356,633; 5,395,619; 5,416,016; 5,417,978; 5,462,854; 5,469,854; 5,512,295; 5,527,528; 5,534,259; 5,543,152; 5,556,948; 5,580,575; and 5,595,756, each of which is herein incorporated by reference.

The antisense compounds of the invention encompass any pharmaceutically acceptable salts, esters, or salts of such esters, or any other compound which, upon administration to an animal, including a human, is capable of providing (directly or indirectly) the biologically active metabolite or residue thereof.

The term "pharmaceutically acceptable salts" refers to physiologically and pharmaceutically acceptable salts of the compounds of the invention: i.e., salts that retain the desired biological activity of the parent compound and do not impart undesired toxicological effects thereto. For oligonucleotides, preferred examples of pharmaceutically acceptable salts and their uses are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

The present invention also includes pharmaceutical compositions and formulations which include the antisense compounds of the invention. The pharmaceutical compositions of the present invention may be administered in a number of ways depending upon whether local or systemic treatment is desired and upon the area to be treated. Administration may be topical (including ophthalmic and to mucous membranes including vaginal and rectal delivery), pulmonary, e.g., by inhalation or insufflation of powders or aerosols, including by nebulizer; intratracheal, intranasal, epidermal and transdermal), oral or parenteral. Parenteral administration

includes intravenous, intraarterial, subcutaneous, intraperitoneal or intramuscular injection or infusion; or intracranial, e.g., intrathecal or intraventricular, administration. Oligonucleotides with at least one 2'-O-methoxyethyl modification are believed to be particularly useful for oral administration. Pharmaceutical compositions and formulations for topical administration may include transdermal patches, ointments, lotions, creams, gels, drops, suppositories, sprays, liquids and powders. Conventional pharmaceutical carriers, aqueous, powder or oily bases, thickeners and the like may be necessary or desirable. Coated condoms, gloves and the like may also be useful.

The pharmaceutical formulations of the present invention, which may conveniently be presented in unit dosage form, may be prepared according to conventional techniques well known in the pharmaceutical industry. Such techniques include the step of bringing into association the active ingredients with the pharmaceutical carrier(s) or excipient(s). In general, the formulations are prepared by uniformly and intimately bringing into association the active ingredients with liquid carriers or finely divided solid carriers or both, and then, if necessary, shaping the product.

The compositions of the present invention may be formulated into any of many possible dosage forms such as, but not limited to, tablets, capsules, gel capsules, liquid syrups, soft gels, suppositories, and enemas. The compositions of the present invention may also be formulated as suspensions in aqueous, non-aqueous or mixed media. Aqueous suspensions may further contain substances which increase the viscosity of the suspension including, for example, sodium carboxymethylcellulose, sorbitol and/or dextran. The suspension may also contain stabilizers.

Pharmaceutical compositions of the present invention include, but are not limited to, solutions, emulsions, foams and liposome-containing formulations. The pharmaceutical compositions and formulations of the present invention may comprise one or more penetration enhancers, carriers, excipients or other active or inactive ingredients.

Emulsions are typically heterogenous systems of one liquid dispersed in another in the form of droplets usually exceeding 0.1 μm in diameter. Emulsions may contain additional components in addition to the dispersed phases, and the active drug which may be present as a solution in either the aqueous phase, oily phase or itself as a separate phase. Microemulsions are included as an embodiment of the present invention. Emulsions and their uses are well known in the art and are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

Formulations of the present invention include liposomal formulations. As used in the present invention, the term "liposome" means a vesicle composed of amphiphilic lipids arranged in a spherical bilayer or bilayers. Liposomes are unilamellar or multilamellar vesicles which have a membrane formed from a lipophilic material and an aqueous interior that contains the composition to be delivered. Cationic liposomes are positively charged liposomes which are believed to interact with negatively charged DNA molecules to form a stable complex. Liposomes that are pH-sensitive or negatively-charged are believed to entrap DNA rather than complex with it. Both cationic and noncationic liposomes have been used to deliver DNA to cells.

Liposomes also include "sterically stabilized" liposomes, a term which, as used herein, refers to liposomes comprising one or more specialized lipids that, when incorporated into liposomes, result in enhanced circulation

lifetimes relative to liposomes lacking such specialized lipids. Examples of sterically stabilized liposomes are those in which part of the vesicle-forming lipid portion of the liposome comprises one or more glycolipids or is derivatized with one or more hydrophilic polymers, such as a polyethylene glycol (PEG) moiety. Liposomes and their uses are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

The pharmaceutical formulations and compositions of the present invention may also include surfactants. The use of surfactants in drug products, formulations and in emulsions is well known in the art. Surfactants and their uses are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

In one embodiment, the present invention employs various penetration enhancers to effect the efficient delivery of nucleic acids, particularly oligonucleotides. In addition to aiding the diffusion of non-lipophilic drugs across cell membranes, penetration enhancers also enhance the permeability of lipophilic drugs. Penetration enhancers may be classified as belonging to one of five broad categories, i.e., surfactants, fatty acids, bile salts, chelating agents, and non-chelating non-surfactants. Penetration enhancers and their uses are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety.

One of skill in the art will recognize that formulations are routinely designed according to their intended use, i.e. route of administration.

Preferred formulations for topical administration include those in which the oligonucleotides of the invention are in admixture with a topical delivery agent such as lipids, liposomes, fatty acids, fatty acid esters, steroids, chelating agents and surfactants. Preferred lipids and

liposomes include neutral (e.g. dioleoylphosphatidyl DOPE ethanolamine, dimyristoylphosphatidyl choline DMPC, distearoylphosphatidyl choline) negative (e.g. dimyristoylphosphatidyl glycerol DMPG) and cationic (e.g. dioleoyltetramethylaminopropyl DOTAP and dioleoylphosphatidyl ethanolamine DOTMA).

For topical or other administration, oligonucleotides of the invention may be encapsulated within liposomes or may form complexes thereto, in particular to cationic liposomes. Alternatively, oligonucleotides may be complexed to lipids, in particular to cationic lipids. Preferred fatty acids and esters, pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, and their uses are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety. Topical formulations are described in detail in United States patent application 09/315,298 filed on May 20, 1999, which is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.

Compositions and formulations for oral administration include powders or granules, microparticulates, nanoparticulates, suspensions or solutions in water or non-aqueous media, capsules, gel capsules, sachets, tablets or minitables. Thickeners, flavoring agents, diluents, emulsifiers, dispersing aids or binders may be desirable. Preferred oral formulations are those in which oligonucleotides of the invention are administered in conjunction with one or more penetration enhancers surfactants and chelators. Preferred surfactants include fatty acids and/or esters or salts thereof, bile acids and/or salts thereof. Preferred bile acids/salts and fatty acids and their uses are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety. Also preferred are combinations of penetration enhancers, for example, fatty acids/salts in combination with bile

acids/salts. A particularly preferred combination is the sodium salt of lauric acid, capric acid and UDCA. Further penetration enhancers include polyoxyethylene-9-lauryl ether, polyoxyethylene-20-cetyl ether. Oligonucleotides of the invention may be delivered orally, in granular form including sprayed dried particles, or complexed to form micro or nanoparticles. Oligonucleotide complexing agents and their uses are further described in U.S. Patent 6,287,860, which is incorporated herein in its entirety. Oral formulations for oligonucleotides and their preparation are described in detail in United States applications 09/108,673 (filed July 1, 1998), 09/315,298 (filed May 20, 1999) and 10/071,822, filed February 8, 2002, each of which is incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

Compositions and formulations for parenteral, intra-theal or intraventricular administration may include sterile aqueous solutions which may also contain buffers, diluents and other suitable additives such as, but not limited to, penetration enhancers, carrier compounds and other pharmaceutically acceptable carriers or excipients.

Certain embodiments of the invention provide pharmaceutical compositions containing one or more oligomeric compounds and one or more other chemotherapeutic agents which function by a non-antisense mechanism. Examples of such chemotherapeutic agents include but are not limited to cancer chemotherapeutic drugs such as daunorubicin, daunomycin, dactinomycin, doxorubicin, epirubicin, idarubicin, esorubicin, bleomycin, mafosfamide, ifosfamide, cytosine arabinoside, bis-chloroethylnitrosurea, busulfan, mitomycin C, actinomycin D, mithramycin, prednisone, hydroxyprogesterone, testosterone, tamoxifen, dacarbazine, procarbazine, hexamethylmelamine, pentamethylmelamine, mitoxantrone, amsacrine, chlorambucil, methylcyclohexylnitrosurea, nitrogen

mustards, melphalan, cyclophosphamide, 6-mercaptopurine, 6-thioguanine, cytarabine, 5-azacytidine, hydroxyurea, deoxycytosine, formycin, 4-hydroxyperoxycyclophosphoramide, 5-fluorouracil (5-FU), 5-fluorodeoxyuridine (5-FUdR), methotrexate (MTX), colchicine, taxol, vincristine, vinblastine, etoposide (VP-16), trimetrexate, irinotecan, topotecan, gemcitabine, teniposide, cisplatin and diethylstilbestrol (DES). When used with the compounds of the invention, such chemotherapeutic agents may be used individually (e.g., 5-FU and oligonucleotide), sequentially (e.g., 5-FU and oligonucleotide for a period of time followed by MTX and oligonucleotide), or in combination with one or more other such chemotherapeutic agents (e.g., 5-FU, MTX and oligonucleotide, or 5-FU, radiotherapy and oligonucleotide). Anti-inflammatory drugs, including but not limited to nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and corticosteroids, and antiviral drugs, including but not limited to ribivirin, vidarabine, acyclovir and ganciclovir, may also be combined in compositions of the invention. Combinations of antisense compounds and other non-antisense drugs are also within the scope of this invention. Two or more combined compounds may be used together or sequentially.

In another related embodiment, compositions of the invention may contain one or more antisense compounds, particularly oligonucleotides, targeted to a first nucleic acid and one or more additional antisense compounds targeted to a second nucleic acid target. Alternatively, compositions of the invention may contain two or more antisense compounds targeted to different regions of the same nucleic acid target. Numerous examples of antisense compounds are known in the art. Two or more combined compounds may be used together or sequentially.

H. Dosing

The formulation of therapeutic compositions and their subsequent administration (dosing) is believed to be within the skill of those in the art. Dosing is dependent on severity and responsiveness of the disease state to be treated, with the course of treatment lasting from several days to several months, or until a cure is effected or a diminution of the disease state is achieved. Optimal dosing schedules can be calculated from measurements of drug accumulation in the body of the patient. Persons of ordinary skill can easily determine optimum dosages, dosing methodologies and repetition rates. Optimum dosages may vary depending on the relative potency of individual oligonucleotides, and can generally be estimated based on EC_{50} s found to be effective in *in vitro* and *in vivo* animal models. In general, dosage is from 0.01 ug to 100 g per kg of body weight, and may be given once or more daily, weekly, monthly or yearly, or even once every 2 to 20 years. Persons of ordinary skill in the art can easily estimate repetition rates for dosing based on measured residence times and concentrations of the drug in bodily fluids or tissues. Following successful treatment, it may be desirable to have the patient undergo maintenance therapy to prevent the recurrence of the disease state, wherein the oligonucleotide is administered in maintenance doses, ranging from 0.01 ug to 100 g per kg of body weight, once or more daily, to once every 20 years.

While the present invention has been described with specificity in accordance with certain of its preferred embodiments, the following examples serve only to illustrate the invention and are not intended to limit the same. Each of the references, GenBank accession numbers, and the like recited in the present application is incorporated herein by

reference in its entirety.

EXAMPLES

Example 1

Synthesis of Nucleoside Phosphoramidites

The following compounds, including amidites and their intermediates were prepared as described in US Patent 6,426,220 and published PCT WO 02/36743; 5'-O-Dimethoxytrityl-thymidine intermediate for 5-methyl dC amidite, 5'-O-Dimethoxytrityl-2'-deoxy-5-methylcytidine intermediate for 5-methyl-dC amidite, 5'-O-Dimethoxytrityl-2'-deoxy-N⁴-benzoyl-5-methylcytidine penultimate intermediate for 5-methyl dC amidite, [5'-O-(4,4'-Dimethoxytriphenylmethyl)-2'-deoxy-N⁴-benzoyl-5-methylcytidin-3'-O-yl]-2-cyanoethyl-N,N-diisopropylphosphoramidite (5-methyl dC amidite), 2'-Fluorodeoxyadenosine, 2'-Fluorodeoxyguanosine, 2'-Fluorouridine, 2'-Fluorodeoxycytidine, 2'-O-(2-Methoxyethyl) modified amidites, 2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-5-methyluridine intermediate, 5'-O-DMT-2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-5-methyluridine penultimate intermediate, [5'-O-(4,4'-Dimethoxytriphenylmethyl)-2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-5-methyluridin-3'-O-yl]-2-cyanoethyl-N,N-diisopropylphosphoramidite (MOE T amidite), 5'-O-Dimethoxytrityl-2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-5-methylcytidine intermediate, 5'-O-dimethoxytrityl-2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-N⁴-benzoyl-5-methyl-cytidine penultimate intermediate, [5'-O-(4,4'-Dimethoxytriphenylmethyl)-2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-N⁴-benzoyl-5-methylcytidin-3'-O-yl]-2-cyanoethyl-N,N-diisopropylphosphoramidite (MOE 5-Me-C amidite), [5'-O-(4,4'-Dimethoxytriphenylmethyl)-2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-N⁶-benzoyladenoin-3'-O-yl]-2-cyanoethyl-N,N-diisopropylphosphoramidite (MOE A amidite), [5'-O-(4,4'-

Dimethoxytriphenylmethyl)-2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)-N⁴-isobutyrylguanosin-3'-O-yl]-2-cyanoethyl-N,N-diisopropylphosphoramidite (MOE G amidite), 2'-O-(Aminooxyethyl) nucleoside amidites and 2'-O-(dimethylamino-oxyethyl) nucleoside amidites, 2'-(Dimethylaminooxyethoxy) nucleoside amidites, 5'-O-tert-Butyldiphenylsilyl-O²-2'-anhydro-5-methyluridine, 5'-O-tert-Butyldiphenylsilyl-2'-O-(2-hydroxyethyl)-5-methyluridine, 2'-O-([2-phthalimidoxy)ethyl]-5'-t-butyldiphenylsilyl-5-methyluridine, 5'-O-tert-butyldiphenylsilyl-2'-O-[(2-formadoximinooxy)ethyl]-5-methyluridine, 5'-O-tert-Butyldiphenylsilyl-2'-O-[N,N dimethylaminooxyethyl]-5-methyluridine, 2'-O-(dimethylaminooxyethyl)-5-methyluridine, 5'-O-DMT-2'-O-(dimethylaminooxyethyl)-5-methyluridine, 5'-O-DMT-2'-O-(2-N,N-dimethylaminooxyethyl)-5-methyluridine-3'-[(2-cyanoethyl)-N,N-diisopropylphosphoramidite], 2'-(Aminooxyethoxy) nucleoside amidites, N²-isobutyryl-6-O-diphenylcarbamoyl-2'-O-(2-ethylacetyl)-5'-O-(4,4'-dimethoxytrityl)guanosine-3'-[(2-cyanoethyl)-N,N-diisopropylphosphoramidite], 2'-dimethylaminoethoxyethoxy (2'-DMAEOE) nucleoside amidites, 2'-O-[2(2-N,N-dimethylaminoethoxy)ethyl]-5-methyl uridine, 5'-O-dimethoxytrityl-2'-O-[2(2-N,N-dimethylaminoethoxy)-ethyl]]-5-methyl uridine and 5'-O-Dimethoxytrityl-2'-O-[2(2-N,N-dimethylaminoethoxy)-ethyl]]-5-methyl uridine-3'-O-(cyanoethyl-N,N-diisopropyl)phosphoramidite.

Example 2

Oligonucleotide and oligonucleoside synthesis

The antisense compounds used in accordance with this invention may be conveniently and routinely made through the well-known technique of solid phase synthesis. Equipment for such synthesis is sold by several vendors including, for

example, Applied Biosystems (Foster City, CA). Any other means for such synthesis known in the art may additionally or alternatively be employed. It is well known to use similar techniques to prepare oligonucleotides such as the phosphorothioates and alkylated derivatives.

Oligonucleotides: Unsubstituted and substituted phosphodiester (P=O) oligonucleotides are synthesized on an automated DNA synthesizer (Applied Biosystems model 394) using standard phosphoramidite chemistry with oxidation by iodine.

Phosphorothioates (P=S) are synthesized similar to phosphodiester oligonucleotides with the following exceptions: thiation was effected by utilizing a 10% w/v solution of 3,4-dihydro-2H-benzothiole-3-one 1,1-dioxide in acetonitrile for the oxidation of the phosphite linkages. The thiation reaction step time was increased to 180 sec and preceded by the normal capping step. After cleavage from the CPG column and deblocking in concentrated ammonium hydroxide at 55°C (12-16 hr), the oligonucleotides were recovered by precipitating with >3 volumes of ethanol from a 1 M NH₄OAc solution. Phosphinate oligonucleotides are prepared as described in U.S. Patent 5,508,270, herein incorporated by reference.

Alkyl phosphonate oligonucleotides are prepared as described in U.S. Patent 4,469,863, herein incorporated by reference.

3'-Deoxy-3'-methylene phosphonate oligonucleotides are prepared as described in U.S. Patents 5,610,289 or 5,625,050, herein incorporated by reference.

Phosphoramidite oligonucleotides are prepared as described in U.S. Patent, 5,256,775 or U.S. Patent 5,366,878, herein incorporated by reference.

Alkylphosphonothioate oligonucleotides are prepared as described in published PCT applications PCT/US94/00902 and PCT/US93/06976 (published as WO 94/17093 and WO 94/02499, respectively), herein incorporated by reference.

3'-Deoxy-3'-amino phosphoramidate oligonucleotides are prepared as described in U.S. Patent 5,476,925, herein incorporated by reference.

Phosphotriester oligonucleotides are prepared as described in U.S. Patent 5,023,243, herein incorporated by reference.

Borano phosphate oligonucleotides are prepared as described in U.S. Patents 5,130,302 and 5,177,198, both herein incorporated by reference.

Oligonucleosides: Methylenemethylimino linked oligonucleosides, also identified as MMI linked oligonucleosides, methylenedimethylhydrazo linked oligonucleosides, also identified as MDH linked oligonucleosides, and methylenecarbonylamino linked oligonucleosides, also identified as amide-3 linked oligonucleosides, and methyleneaminocarbonyl linked oligonucleosides, also identified as amide-4 linked oligonucleosides, as well as mixed backbone compounds having, for instance, alternating MMI and P=O or P=S linkages are prepared as described in U.S. Patents 5,378,825, 5,386,023, 5,489,677, 5,602,240 and 5,610,289, all of which are herein incorporated by reference.

Formacetal and thioformacetal linked oligonucleosides are prepared as described in U.S. Patents 5,264,562 and 5,264,564, herein incorporated by reference.

Ethylene oxide linked oligonucleosides are prepared as described in U.S. Patent 5,223,618, herein incorporated by reference.

Example 3**RNA Synthesis**

In general, RNA synthesis chemistry is based on the selective incorporation of various protecting groups at strategic intermediary reactions. Although one of ordinary skill in the art will understand the use of protecting groups in organic synthesis, a useful class of protecting groups includes silyl ethers. In particular bulky silyl ethers are used to protect the 5'-hydroxyl in combination with an acid-labile orthoester protecting group on the 2'-hydroxyl. This set of protecting groups is then used with standard solid-phase synthesis technology. It is important to lastly remove the acid labile orthoester protecting group after all other synthetic steps. Moreover, the early use of the silyl protecting groups during synthesis ensures facile removal when desired, without undesired deprotection of 2' hydroxyl.

Following this procedure for the sequential protection of the 5'-hydroxyl in combination with protection of the 2'-hydroxyl by protecting groups that are differentially removed and are differentially chemically labile, RNA oligonucleotides were synthesized.

RNA oligonucleotides are synthesized in a stepwise fashion. Each nucleotide is added sequentially (3'- to 5'-direction) to a solid support-bound oligonucleotide. The first nucleoside at the 3'-end of the chain is covalently attached to a solid support. The nucleotide precursor, a ribonucleoside phosphoramidite, and activator are added, coupling the second base onto the 5'-end of the first nucleoside. The support is washed and any unreacted 5'-hydroxyl groups are capped with acetic anhydride to yield 5'-acetyl moieties. The linkage is then oxidized to the more stable and ultimately desired P(V) linkage. At the end of

the nucleotide addition cycle, the 5'-silyl group is cleaved with fluoride. The cycle is repeated for each subsequent nucleotide.

Following synthesis, the methyl protecting groups on the phosphates are cleaved in 30 minutes utilizing 1 M disodium-2-carbamoyl-2-cyanoethylene-1,1-dithiolate trihydrate (S_2Na_2) in DMF. The deprotection solution is washed from the solid support-bound oligonucleotide using water. The support is then treated with 40% methylamine in water for 10 minutes at 55 °C. This releases the RNA oligonucleotides into solution, deprotects the exocyclic amines, and modifies the 2'- groups. The oligonucleotides can be analyzed by anion exchange HPLC at this stage.

The 2'-orthoester groups are the last protecting groups to be removed. The ethylene glycol monoacetate orthoester protecting group developed by Dharmacon Research, Inc. (Lafayette, CO), is one example of a useful orthoester protecting group which, has the following important properties. It is stable to the conditions of nucleoside phosphoramidite synthesis and oligonucleotide synthesis. However, after oligonucleotide synthesis the oligonucleotide is treated with methylamine which not only cleaves the oligonucleotide from the solid support but also removes the acetyl groups from the orthoesters. The resulting 2-ethyl-hydroxyl substituents on the orthoester are less electron withdrawing than the acetylated precursor. As a result, the modified orthoester becomes more labile to acid-catalyzed hydrolysis. Specifically, the rate of cleavage is approximately 10 times faster after the acetyl groups are removed. Therefore, this orthoester possesses sufficient stability in order to be compatible with oligonucleotide synthesis and yet, when subsequently modified, permits deprotection to be carried out under relatively mild aqueous

conditions compatible with the final RNA oligonucleotide product.

Additionally, methods of RNA synthesis are well known in the art (Scaringe, S. A. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Colorado, 1996; Scaringe, S. A., et al., *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, **1998**, *120*, 11820-11821; Matteucci, M. D. and Caruthers, M. H. *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, **1981**, *103*, 3185-3191; Beaucage, S. L. and Caruthers, M. H. *Tetrahedron Lett.*, **1981**, *22*, 1859-1862; Dahl, B. J., et al., *Acta Chem. Scand.*, **1990**, *44*, 639-641; Reddy, M. P., et al., *Tetrahedron Lett.*, **1994**, *25*, 4311-4314; Wincott, F. et al., *Nucleic Acids Res.*, **1995**, *23*, 2677-2684; Griffin, B. E., et al., *Tetrahedron*, **1967**, *23*, 2301-2313; Griffin, B. E., et al., *Tetrahedron*, **1967**, *23*, 2315-2331).

RNA antisense compounds (RNA oligonucleotides) of the present invention can be synthesized by the methods herein or purchased from Dharmacon Research, Inc (Lafayette, CO). Once synthesized, complementary RNA antisense compounds can then be annealed by methods known in the art to form double stranded (duplexed) antisense compounds. For example, duplexes can be formed by combining 30 μ l of each of the complementary strands of RNA oligonucleotides (50 uM RNA oligonucleotide solution) and 15 μ l of 5X annealing buffer (100 mM potassium acetate, 30 mM HEPES-KOH pH 7.4, 2 mM magnesium acetate) followed by heating for 1 minute at 90°C, then 1 hour at 37°C. The resulting duplexed antisense compounds can be used in kits, assays, screens, or other methods to investigate the role of a target nucleic acid, or for diagnostic or therapeutic purposes.

Example 4

Synthesis of Chimeric Compounds

Chimeric oligonucleotides, oligonucleosides or mixed oligonucleotides/oligonucleosides of the invention can be of

several different types. These include a first type wherein the "gap" segment of linked nucleosides is positioned between 5' and 3' "wing" segments of linked nucleosides and a second "open end" type wherein the "gap" segment is located at either the 3' or the 5' terminus of the oligomeric compound. Oligonucleotides of the first type are also known in the art as "gapmers" or gapped oligonucleotides. Oligonucleotides of the second type are also known in the art as "hemimers" or "wingmers".

**[2'-O-Me]--[2'-deoxy]--[2'-O-Me] Chimeric
Phosphorothioate Oligonucleotides**

Chimeric oligonucleotides having 2'-O-alkyl phosphorothioate and 2'-deoxy phosphorothioate oligonucleotide segments are synthesized using an Applied Biosystems automated DNA synthesizer Model 394, as above. Oligonucleotides are synthesized using the automated synthesizer and 2'-deoxy-5'-dimethoxytrityl-3'-O-phosphoramidite for the DNA portion and 5'-dimethoxytrityl-2'-O-methyl-3'-O-phosphoramidite for 5' and 3' wings. The standard synthesis cycle is modified by incorporating coupling steps with increased reaction times for the 5'-dimethoxytrityl-2'-O-methyl-3'-O-phosphoramidite. The fully protected oligonucleotide is cleaved from the support and deprotected in concentrated ammonia (NH₄OH) for 12-16 hr at 55°C. The deprotected oligo is then recovered by an appropriate method (precipitation, column chromatography, volume reduced in vacuo and analyzed spectrophotometrically for yield and for purity by capillary electrophoresis and by mass spectrometry.

**[2'-O-(2-Methoxyethyl)]--[2'-deoxy]--[2'-O-(
Methoxyethyl)] Chimeric Phosphorothioate
Oligonucleotides**

[2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl)]--[2'-deoxy]--[2'-O-(methoxyethyl)] chimeric phosphorothioate oligonucleotides were prepared as per the procedure above for the 2'-O-methyl chimeric oligonucleotide, with the substitution of 2'-O-(methoxyethyl) amidites for the 2'-O-methyl amidites.

**[2'-O-(2-Methoxyethyl)Phosphodiester]--[2'-deoxy
Phosphorothioate]--[2'-O-(2-Methoxyethyl)
Phosphodiester] Chimeric Oligonucleotides**

[2'-O-(2-methoxyethyl phosphodiester)]--[2'-deoxy phosphorothioate]--[2'-O-(methoxyethyl) phosphodiester] chimeric oligonucleotides are prepared as per the above procedure for the 2'-O-methyl chimeric oligonucleotide with the substitution of 2'-O-(methoxyethyl) amidites for the 2'-O-methyl amidites, oxidation with iodine to generate the phosphodiester internucleotide linkages within the wing portions of the chimeric structures and sulfurization utilizing 3,4-dihydro-2H-benzothiole-3-one 1,1 dioxide (Beaucage Reagent) to generate the phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages for the center gap.

Other chimeric oligonucleotides, chimeric oligonucleosides and mixed chimeric oligonucleotides/oligonucleosides are synthesized according to United States patent 5,623,065, herein incorporated by reference.

Example 5

**Design and screening of duplexed antisense compounds
targeting ACE2**

In accordance with the present invention, a series of nucleic acid duplexes comprising the antisense compounds of the present invention and their complements can be designed to target ACE2. The nucleobase sequence of the antisense

strand of the duplex comprises at least an 8-nucleobase portion of an oligonucleotide in Table 1. The ends of the strands may be modified by the addition of one or more natural or modified nucleobases to form an overhang. The sense strand of the dsRNA is then designed and synthesized as the complement of the antisense strand and may also contain modifications or additions to either terminus. For example, in one embodiment, both strands of the dsRNA duplex would be complementary over the central nucleobases, each having overhangs at one or both termini.

For example, a duplex comprising an antisense strand having the sequence CGAGAGGCGGACGGGACCG and having a two-nucleobase overhang of deoxythymidine(dT) would have the following structure:

cgagaggcggacgggaccgTT	Antisense Strand
TTgctctccgcctgccctggc	Complement

In another embodiment, a duplex comprising an antisense strand having the same sequence CGAGAGGCGGACGGGACCG may be prepared with blunt ends (no single stranded overhang) as shown:

cgagaggcggacgggaccg	Antisense Strand
gctctccgcctgccctggc	Complement

RNA strands of the duplex can be synthesized by methods disclosed herein or purchased from Dharmacon Research Inc., (Lafayette, CO). Once synthesized, the complementary strands are annealed. The single strands are aliquoted and diluted to a concentration of 50 uM. Once diluted, 30 uL of each strand is combined with 15uL of a 5X solution of annealing buffer. The final concentration of said buffer is 100 mM potassium acetate, 30 mM HEPES-KOH pH 7.4, and 2mM magnesium acetate. The final volume is 75 uL. This solution is incubated for 1

minute at 90°C and then centrifuged for 15 seconds. The tube is allowed to sit for 1 hour at 37°C at which time the dsRNA duplexes are used in experimentation. The final concentration of the dsRNA duplex is 20 uM. This solution can be stored frozen (-20°C) and freeze-thawed up to 5 times.

Once prepared, the duplexed antisense compounds are evaluated for their ability to modulate ACE2 expression.

When cells reached 80% confluency, they are treated with duplexed antisense compounds of the invention. For cells grown in 96-well plates, wells are washed once with 200 µL OPTI-MEM-1 reduced-serum medium (Gibco BRL) and then treated with 130 µL of OPTI-MEM-1 containing 12 µg/mL LIPOFECTIN (Gibco BRL) and the desired duplex antisense compound at a final concentration of 200 nM. After 5 hours of treatment, the medium is replaced with fresh medium. Cells are harvested 16 hours after treatment, at which time RNA is isolated and target reduction measured by RT-PCR.

Example 6

Oligonucleotide Isolation

After cleavage from the controlled pore glass solid support and deblocking in concentrated ammonium hydroxide at 55°C for 12-16 hours, the oligonucleotides or oligonucleosides are recovered by precipitation out of 1 M NH₄OAc with >3 volumes of ethanol. Synthesized oligonucleotides were analyzed by electrospray mass spectroscopy (molecular weight determination) and by capillary gel electrophoresis and judged to be at least 70% full length material. The relative amounts of phosphorothioate and phosphodiester linkages obtained in the synthesis was determined by the ratio of correct molecular weight relative to the -16 amu product (+/- 32 +/-48). For some studies oligonucleotides were purified by HPLC, as described by Chiang *et al.*, *J. Biol. Chem.* **1991**,

266, 18162-18171. Results obtained with HPLC-purified material were similar to those obtained with non-HPLC purified material.

Example 7

Oligonucleotide Synthesis - 96 Well Plate Format

Oligonucleotides were synthesized via solid phase P(III) phosphoramidite chemistry on an automated synthesizer capable of assembling 96 sequences simultaneously in a 96-well format. Phosphodiester internucleotide linkages were afforded by oxidation with aqueous iodine. Phosphorothioate internucleotide linkages were generated by sulfurization utilizing 3,4-dihydro-2H-benzothiole-3-one 1,1-dioxide (Beaucage Reagent) in anhydrous acetonitrile. Standard base-protected beta-cyanoethyl-diisopropyl phosphoramidites were purchased from commercial vendors (e.g. PE-Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, or Pharmacia, Piscataway, NJ). Non-standard nucleosides are synthesized as per standard or patented methods. They are utilized as base protected beta-cyanoethyldiisopropyl phosphoramidites.

Oligonucleotides were cleaved from support and deprotected with concentrated NH_4OH at elevated temperature (55-60°C) for 12-16 hours and the released product then dried *in vacuo*. The dried product was then re-suspended in sterile water to afford a master plate from which all analytical and test plate samples are then diluted utilizing robotic pipettors.

Example 8

Oligonucleotide Analysis - 96-Well Plate Format

The concentration of oligonucleotide in each well was assessed by dilution of samples and UV absorption spectroscopy. The full-length integrity of the individual

products was evaluated by capillary electrophoresis (CE) in either the 96-well format (Beckman P/ACE™ MDQ) or, for individually prepared samples, on a commercial CE apparatus (e.g., Beckman P/ACE™ 5000, ABI 270). Base and backbone composition was confirmed by mass analysis of the compounds utilizing electrospray-mass spectroscopy. All assay test plates were diluted from the master plate using single and multi-channel robotic pipettors. Plates were judged to be acceptable if at least 85% of the compounds on the plate were at least 85% full length.

Example 9

Cell culture and oligonucleotide treatment

The effect of antisense compounds on target nucleic acid expression can be tested in any of a variety of cell types provided that the target nucleic acid is present at measurable levels. This can be routinely determined using, for example, PCR or Northern blot analysis. The following cell types are provided for illustrative purposes, but other cell types can be routinely used, provided that the target is expressed in the cell type chosen. This can be readily determined by methods routine in the art, for example Northern blot analysis, ribonuclease protection assays, or RT-PCR.

T-24 cells:

The human transitional cell bladder carcinoma cell line T-24 was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) (Manassas, VA). T-24 cells were routinely cultured in complete McCoy's 5A basal media (Invitrogen Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA) supplemented with 10% fetal calf serum (Invitrogen Corporation, Carlsbad, CA), penicillin 100 units per mL, and streptomycin 100 micrograms per mL

(Invitrogen Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA). Cells were routinely passaged by trypsinization and dilution when they reached 90% confluence. Cells were seeded into 96-well plates (Falcon-Primaria #353872) at a density of 7000 cells/well for use in real time PCR analysis.

For Northern blotting or other analysis, cells may be seeded onto 100 mm or other standard tissue culture plates and treated similarly, using appropriate volumes of medium and oligonucleotide.

A549 cells:

The human lung carcinoma cell line A549 was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC) (Manassas, VA). A549 cells were routinely cultured in DMEM basal media (Invitrogen Corporation, Carlsbad, CA) supplemented with 10% fetal calf serum (Invitrogen Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA), penicillin 100 units per mL, and streptomycin 100 micrograms per mL (Invitrogen Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA). Cells were routinely passaged by trypsinization and dilution when they reached 90% confluence.

NHDF cells:

Human neonatal dermal fibroblast (NHDF) were obtained from the Clonetics Corporation (Walkersville, MD). NHDFs were routinely maintained in Fibroblast Growth Medium (Clonetics Corporation, Walkersville, MD) supplemented as recommended by the supplier. Cells were maintained for up to 10 passages as recommended by the supplier.

HEK cells:

Human embryonic keratinocytes (HEK) were obtained from the Clonetics Corporation (Walkersville, MD). HEKs were routinely maintained in Keratinocyte Growth Medium (Clonetics

Corporation, Walkersville, MD) formulated as recommended by the supplier. Cells were routinely maintained for up to 10 passages as recommended by the supplier.

Vero C1008 cells:

The African green monkey normal kidney cell line Vero C1008 was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (Manassas, VA). Vero C1008 cells were routinely cultured in DMEM supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum and 1% penicillin/streptomycin and adjusted to contain 4 mM L-glutamine, 1.5 grams per liter sodium bicarbonate and 4.5 grams per liter glucose. Cells were routinely passaged by trypsinization and dilution when they reached 90% confluence. Cells were seeded onto 96-well plates (Falcon-353047) at a density of 4,000 cells per well for use in antisense oligonucleotide transfection for screening experiments and at a density of 8,000 cells per well for dose-response experiments.

CaCo-2 cells:

The human primary colonic tumor cell line CaCo-2 was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (Manassas, VA). CaCo-2 cells were routinely cultured in MEM supplemented with 2mM L-glutamine and Earle's BSS adjusted to contain 1.5 g/L sodium bicarbonate, 0.1 mM non-essential amino acids, and 1 mM sodium pyruvate, 20% fetal bovine serum and 1% penicillin/streptomycin (Invitrogen Life Technologies, Carlsbad, CA). Cells were routinely passaged by trypsinization and dilution when they reached 90% confluence. Cells were seeded onto 96-well plates (Falcon-353047) at a density of 5000 cells/well for use in antisense oligonucleotide transfection.

Treatment with antisense compounds:

When cells reached 65-75% confluency, they were treated with oligonucleotide. For cells grown in 96-well plates, wells were washed once with 100 μ L OPTI-MEM™-1 reduced-serum medium (Invitrogen Corporation, Carlsbad, CA) and then treated with 130 μ L of OPTI-MEM™-1 containing 3.75 μ g/mL LIPOFECTIN™ (Invitrogen Corporation, Carlsbad, CA) and the desired concentration of oligonucleotide. Cells are treated and data are obtained in triplicate. After 4-7 hours of treatment at 37°C, the medium was replaced with fresh medium. Cells were harvested 16-24 hours after oligonucleotide treatment.

The concentration of oligonucleotide used varies from cell line to cell line. To determine the optimal oligonucleotide concentration for a particular cell line, the cells are treated with a positive control oligonucleotide at a range of concentrations. For human cells the positive control oligonucleotide is selected from either ISIS 13920 (**TCCGTCATCGCTCCTCAGGG**, SEQ ID NO: 1) which is targeted to human H-ras, or ISIS 18078, (**GTGCGCGCGAGCCCGAAATC**, SEQ ID NO: 2) which is targeted to human Jun-N-terminal kinase-2 (JNK2). Both controls are 2'-O-methoxyethyl gapmers (2'-O-methoxyethyls shown in bold) with a phosphorothioate backbone. For mouse or rat cells the positive control oligonucleotide is ISIS 15770, **ATGCATTCTGCCCCCAAGGA**, SEQ ID NO: 3, a 2'-O-methoxyethyl gapmer (2'-O-methoxyethyls shown in bold) with a phosphorothioate backbone which is targeted to both mouse and rat c-raf. The concentration of positive control oligonucleotide that results in 80% inhibition of c-H-ras (for ISIS 13920), JNK2 (for ISIS 18078) or c-raf (for ISIS 15770) mRNA is then utilized as the screening concentration for new oligonucleotides in subsequent experiments for that cell line. If 80% inhibition is not

achieved, the lowest concentration of positive control oligonucleotide that results in 60% inhibition of c-H-ras, JNK2 or c-raf mRNA is then utilized as the oligonucleotide screening concentration in subsequent experiments for that cell line. If 60% inhibition is not achieved, that particular cell line is deemed as unsuitable for oligonucleotide transfection experiments. The concentrations of antisense oligonucleotides used herein are from 50 nM to 300 nM.

Example 10

Analysis of oligonucleotide inhibition of ACE2 expression

Antisense modulation of ACE2 expression can be assayed in a variety of ways known in the art. For example, ACE2 mRNA levels can be quantitated by, e.g., Northern blot analysis, competitive polymerase chain reaction (PCR), or real-time PCR (RT-PCR). Real-time quantitative PCR is presently preferred. RNA analysis can be performed on total cellular RNA or poly(A)+ mRNA. The preferred method of RNA analysis of the present invention is the use of total cellular RNA as described in other examples herein. Methods of RNA isolation are well known in the art. Northern blot analysis is also routine in the art. Real-time quantitative (PCR) can be conveniently accomplished using the commercially available ABI PRISM™ 7600, 7700, or 7900 Sequence Detection System, available from PE-Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA and used according to manufacturer's instructions.

Protein levels of ACE2 can be quantitated in a variety of ways well known in the art, such as immunoprecipitation, Western blot analysis (immunoblotting), enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) or fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS). Antibodies directed to ACE2 can be identified and obtained from a variety of sources, such as

the MSRS catalog of antibodies (Aerie Corporation, Birmingham, MI), or can be prepared via conventional monoclonal or polyclonal antibody generation methods well known in the art.

Example 11

Design of phenotypic assays for the use of ACE2 inhibitors

Phenotypic assays

Once ACE2 inhibitors have been identified by the methods disclosed herein, the compounds are further investigated in one or more phenotypic assays, each having measurable endpoints predictive of efficacy in the treatment of a particular disease state or condition.

Phenotypic assays, kits and reagents for their use are well known to those skilled in the art and are herein used to investigate the role and/or association of ACE2 in health and disease. Representative phenotypic assays, which can be purchased from any one of several commercial vendors, include those for determining cell viability, cytotoxicity, proliferation or cell survival (Molecular Probes, Eugene, OR; PerkinElmer, Boston, MA), protein-based assays including enzymatic assays (Panvera, LLC, Madison, WI; BD Biosciences, Franklin Lakes, NJ; Oncogene Research Products, San Diego, CA), cell regulation, signal transduction, inflammation, oxidative processes and apoptosis (Assay Designs Inc., Ann Arbor, MI), triglyceride accumulation (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO), angiogenesis assays, tube formation assays, cytokine and hormone assays and metabolic assays (Chemicon International Inc., Temecula, CA; Amersham Biosciences, Piscataway, NJ).

In one non-limiting example, cells determined to be appropriate for a particular phenotypic assay (i.e., MCF-7 cells selected for breast cancer studies; adipocytes for

obesity studies) are treated with ACE2 inhibitors identified from the *in vitro* studies as well as control compounds at optimal concentrations which are determined by the methods described above. At the end of the treatment period, treated and untreated cells are analyzed by one or more methods specific for the assay to determine phenotypic outcomes and endpoints.

Phenotypic endpoints include changes in cell morphology over time or treatment dose as well as changes in levels of cellular components such as proteins, lipids, nucleic acids, hormones, saccharides or metals. Measurements of cellular status which include pH, stage of the cell cycle, intake or excretion of biological indicators by the cell, are also endpoints of interest.

Analysis of the genotype of the cell (measurement of the expression of one or more of the genes of the cell) after treatment is also used as an indicator of the efficacy or potency of the ACE2 inhibitors. Hallmark genes, or those genes suspected to be associated with a specific disease state, condition, or phenotype, are measured in both treated and untreated cells.

Example 12

RNA Isolation

Poly(A)+ mRNA isolation

Poly(A)+ mRNA was isolated according to Miura *et al.*, (*Clin. Chem.*, **1996**, 42, 1758-1764). Other methods for poly(A)+ mRNA isolation are routine in the art. Briefly, for cells grown on 96-well plates, growth medium was removed from the cells and each well was washed with 200 μ L cold PBS. 60 μ L lysis buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl, pH 7.6, 1 mM EDTA, 0.5 M NaCl, 0.5% NP-40, 20 mM vanadyl-ribonucleoside complex) was

added to each well, the plate was gently agitated and then incubated at room temperature for five minutes. 55 μ L of lysate was transferred to Oligo d(T) coated 96-well plates (AGCT Inc., Irvine CA). Plates were incubated for 60 minutes at room temperature, washed 3 times with 200 μ L of wash buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.6, 1 mM EDTA, 0.3 M NaCl). After the final wash, the plate was blotted on paper towels to remove excess wash buffer and then air-dried for 5 minutes. 60 μ L of elution buffer (5 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.6), preheated to 70°C, was added to each well, the plate was incubated on a 90°C hot plate for 5 minutes, and the eluate was then transferred to a fresh 96-well plate.

Cells grown on 100 mm or other standard plates may be treated similarly, using appropriate volumes of all solutions.

Total RNA Isolation

Total RNA was isolated using an RNEASY 96™ kit and buffers purchased from Qiagen Inc. (Valencia, CA) following the manufacturer's recommended procedures. Briefly, for cells grown on 96-well plates, growth medium was removed from the cells and each well was washed with 200 μ L cold PBS. 150 μ L Buffer RLT was added to each well and the plate vigorously agitated for 20 seconds. 150 μ L of 70% ethanol was then added to each well and the contents mixed by pipetting three times up and down. The samples were then transferred to the RNEASY 96™ well plate attached to a QIAVAC™ manifold fitted with a waste collection tray and attached to a vacuum source. Vacuum was applied for 1 minute. 500 μ L of Buffer RW1 was added to each well of the RNEASY 96™ plate and incubated for 15 minutes and the vacuum was again applied for 1 minute. An

additional 500 μ L of Buffer RW1 was added to each well of the RNEASY 96TM plate and the vacuum was applied for 2 minutes. 1 mL of Buffer RPE was then added to each well of the RNEASY 96TM plate and the vacuum applied for a period of 90 seconds. The Buffer RPE wash was then repeated and the vacuum was applied for an additional 3 minutes. The plate was then removed from the QIAVACTM manifold and blotted dry on paper towels. The plate was then re-attached to the QIAVACTM manifold fitted with a collection tube rack containing 1.2 mL collection tubes. RNA was then eluted by pipetting 140 μ L of RNase free water into each well, incubating 1 minute, and then applying the vacuum for 3 minutes.

The repetitive pipetting and elution steps may be automated using a QIAGEN Bio-Robot 9604 (Qiagen, Inc., Valencia CA). Essentially, after lysing of the cells on the culture plate, the plate is transferred to the robot deck where the pipetting, DNase treatment and elution steps are carried out.

Example 13

Real-time Quantitative PCR Analysis of ACE2 mRNA Levels

Quantitation of ACE2 mRNA levels was accomplished by real-time quantitative PCR using the ABI PRISMTM 7600, 7700, or 7900 Sequence Detection System (PE-Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA) according to manufacturer's instructions. This is a closed-tube, non-gel-based, fluorescence detection system which allows high-throughput quantitation of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) products in real-time. As opposed to standard PCR in which amplification products are quantitated after the PCR is completed, products in real-time quantitative PCR are quantitated as they accumulate. This is accomplished by including in the PCR reaction an

oligonucleotide probe that anneals specifically between the forward and reverse PCR primers, and contains two fluorescent dyes. A reporter dye (e.g., FAM or JOE, obtained from either PE-Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, Operon Technologies Inc., Alameda, CA or Integrated DNA Technologies Inc., Coralville, IA) is attached to the 5' end of the probe and a quencher dye (e.g., TAMRA, obtained from either PE-Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, Operon Technologies Inc., Alameda, CA or Integrated DNA Technologies Inc., Coralville, IA) is attached to the 3' end of the probe. When the probe and dyes are intact, reporter dye emission is quenched by the proximity of the 3' quencher dye. During amplification, annealing of the probe to the target sequence creates a substrate that can be cleaved by the 5'-exonuclease activity of Taq polymerase. During the extension phase of the PCR amplification cycle, cleavage of the probe by Taq polymerase releases the reporter dye from the remainder of the probe (and hence from the quencher moiety) and a sequence-specific fluorescent signal is generated. With each cycle, additional reporter dye molecules are cleaved from their respective probes, and the fluorescence intensity is monitored at regular intervals by laser optics built into the ABI PRISM™ Sequence Detection System. In each assay, a series of parallel reactions containing serial dilutions of mRNA from untreated control samples generates a standard curve that is used to quantitate the percent inhibition after antisense oligonucleotide treatment of test samples.

Prior to quantitative PCR analysis, primer-probe sets specific to the target gene being measured are evaluated for their ability to be "multiplexed" with a GAPDH amplification reaction. In multiplexing, both the target gene and the internal standard gene GAPDH are amplified concurrently in a single sample. In this analysis, mRNA isolated from

untreated cells is serially diluted. Each dilution is amplified in the presence of primer-probe sets specific for GAPDH only, target gene only ("single-plexing"), or both (multiplexing). Following PCR amplification, standard curves of GAPDH and target mRNA signal as a function of dilution are generated from both the single-plexed and multiplexed samples. If both the slope and correlation coefficient of the GAPDH and target signals generated from the multiplexed samples fall within 10% of their corresponding values generated from the single-plexed samples, the primer-probe set specific for that target is deemed multiplexable. Other methods of PCR are also known in the art.

PCR reagents were obtained from Invitrogen Corporation, (Carlsbad, CA). RT-PCR reactions were carried out by adding 20 μ L PCR cocktail (2.5x PCR buffer minus $MgCl_2$, 6.6 mM $MgCl_2$, 375 μ M each of dATP, dCTP, dGTP and dTTP, 375 nM each of forward primer and reverse primer, 125 nM of probe, 4 Units RNase inhibitor, 1.25 Units PLATINUM® Taq, 5 Units MuLV reverse transcriptase, and 2.5x ROX dye) to 96-well plates containing 30 μ L total RNA solution (20-200 ng). The RT reaction was carried out by incubation for 30 minutes at 48°C. Following a 10 minute incubation at 95°C to activate the PLATINUM® Taq, 40 cycles of a two-step PCR protocol were carried out: 95°C for 15 seconds (denaturation) followed by 60°C for 1.5 minutes (annealing/extension).

Gene target quantities obtained by real time RT-PCR are normalized using either the expression level of GAPDH, a gene whose expression is constant, or by quantifying total RNA using RiboGreen™ (Molecular Probes, Inc. Eugene, OR). GAPDH expression is quantified by real time RT-PCR, by being run simultaneously with the target, multiplexing, or separately. Total RNA is quantified using RiboGreen™ RNA quantification

reagent (Molecular Probes, Inc. Eugene, OR). Methods of RNA quantification by RiboGreen™ are taught in Jones, L.J., et al, (Analytical Biochemistry, 1998, 265, 368-374).

In this assay, 170 µL of RiboGreen™ working reagent (RiboGreen™ reagent diluted 1:350 in 10mM Tris-HCl, 1 mM EDTA, pH 7.5) is pipetted into a 96-well plate containing 30 µL purified, cellular RNA. The plate is read in a CytoFluor 4000 (PE Applied Biosystems) with excitation at 485nm and emission at 530nm.

Probes and primers to human ACE2 were designed to hybridize to a human ACE2 sequence, using published sequence information (GenBank accession number NM_021804.1, incorporated herein as SEQ ID NO: 4). For human ACE2 the PCR primers were:

forward primer: GGCTCCTTCTCAGCCTTGTTG (SEQ ID NO: 5)

reverse primer: GCTTCGTGGTTAACTTGTCCTAA (SEQ ID NO: 6) and

the PCR probe was: FAM-TGTAAGTCTGCTCAGTCCACCATTTGAGG-TAMRA (SEQ ID NO: 7) where FAM is the fluorescent dye and TAMRA is the quencher dye. For human GAPDH the PCR primers were:

forward primer: GAAGGTGAAGGTCGGAGTC (SEQ ID NO: 8)

reverse primer: GAAGATGGTGATGGGATTTTC (SEQ ID NO: 9) and the PCR probe was: 5' JOE-CAAGCTTCCCGTTCTCAGCC- TAMRA 3' (SEQ ID NO: 10) where JOE is the fluorescent reporter dye and TAMRA is the quencher dye.

Example 14

Northern blot analysis of ACE2 mRNA levels

Eighteen hours after antisense treatment, cell monolayers were washed twice with cold PBS and lysed in 1 mL RNAzol™ (TEL-TEST "B" Inc., Friendswood, TX). Total RNA was prepared following manufacturer's recommended protocols. Twenty micrograms of total RNA was fractionated by

electrophoresis through 1.2% agarose gels containing 1.1% formaldehyde using a MOPS buffer system (AMRESCO, Inc. Solon, OH). RNA was transferred from the gel to HYBOND™-N+ nylon membranes (Amersham Pharmacia Biotech, Piscataway, NJ) by overnight capillary transfer using a Northern/Southern Transfer buffer system (TEL-TEST "B" Inc., Friendswood, TX). RNA transfer was confirmed by UV visualization. Membranes were fixed by UV cross-linking using a STRATALINKER™ UV Crosslinker 2400 (Stratagene, Inc, La Jolla, CA) and then probed using QUICKHYB™ hybridization solution (Stratagene, La Jolla, CA) using manufacturer's recommendations for stringent conditions.

To detect human ACE2, a human ACE2 specific probe was prepared by PCR using the forward primer GGCTCCTTCTCAGCCTTGTTG (SEQ ID NO: 5) and the reverse primer GCTTCGTGGTTAAACTTGTCCTAA (SEQ ID NO: 6). To normalize for variations in loading and transfer efficiency membranes were stripped and probed for human glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase (GAPDH) RNA (Clontech, Palo Alto, CA).

Hybridized membranes were visualized and quantitated using a PHOSPHORIMAGER™ and IMAGEQUANT™ Software V3.3 (Molecular Dynamics, Sunnyvale, CA). Data was normalized to GAPDH levels in untreated controls.

Example 15

Antisense inhibition of human ACE2 expression by chimeric phosphorothioate oligonucleotides having 2'-MOE wings and a deoxy gap

In accordance with the present invention, a series of antisense compounds was designed to target different regions of the human ACE2 RNA, using published sequences (GenBank

accession number NM_021804.1, incorporated herein as SEQ ID NO: 4, the complement of nucleotides 11545321 to 11586102 of the sequence with GenBank accession number NT_011757.13, incorporated herein as SEQ ID NO: 11, and GenBank accession number AY358714.1, incorporated herein as SEQ ID NO: 12). The compounds are shown in Table 1. "Target site" indicates the first (5'-most) nucleotide number on the particular target sequence to which the compound binds. All compounds in Table 1 are chimeric oligonucleotides ("gapmers") 20 nucleotides in length, composed of a central "gap" region consisting of ten 2'-deoxynucleotides, which is flanked on both sides (5' and 3' directions) by five-nucleotide "wings". The wings are composed of 2'-methoxyethyl (2'-MOE) nucleotides. The internucleoside (backbone) linkages are phosphorothioate (P=S) throughout the oligonucleotide. All cytidine residues are 5-methylcytidines. The compounds were analyzed for their effect on human ACE2 mRNA levels by quantitative real-time PCR as described in other examples herein. Data are averages from two experiments in which Vero C1008 cells, plated in 96-well plates at a density of 4,000 cells per well, were treated with 150 nM of the antisense oligonucleotides of the present invention. The positive control for each datapoint is identified in the table by sequence ID number. If present, "N.D." indicates "no data".

Table 1

Inhibition of human ACE2 mRNA levels by chimeric phosphorothioate oligonucleotides having 2'-MOE wings and a deoxy gap

ISIS #	REGION	TARGET SEQ ID NO	TARGET SITE	SEQUENCE	% INHIB	SEQ ID NO	CONTROL SEQ ID NO
348740	5'UTR	4	4	agcctttgaacttgggttgg	21	13	2
348741	5'UTR	4	56	ctgaatgactttccctagac	40	14	2

348742	Start Codon	4	96	agagcttgacatcggtcccct	81	15	2
348743	Coding	4	116	aggctgagaaggagccagga	64	16	2
348744	Coding	4	121	caacaaggctgagaaggagc	21	17	2
348745	Coding	4	224	gaagcaagtgaactttgata	75	18	2
348746	Coding	4	229	tccaagaagcaagtgaactt	54	19	2
348747	Coding	4	234	ataattccaagaagcaagtg	51	20	2
348748	Coding	4	280	cagcattattcatgttttg	72	21	2
348749	Coding	4	308	tccttttaaaaggcagacca	42	22	2
348750	Coding	4	417	gtcttctgagagcactgaag	67	23	2
348751	Coding	4	482	caaacttttccagtactgta	82	24	2
348752	Coding	4	515	agtaataagcattcttgtgg	0	25	2
348753	Coding	4	606	cttgccgacctcagatctcc	60	26	2
348754	Coding	4	695	ctccaataatccccatagtc	0	27	2
348755	Coding	4	743	ccgcggtgtgtagtcatagcc	69	28	2
348756	Coding	4	818	ctcacataggcatgaagatg	78	29	2
348757	Coding	4	881	aaatgagcaggaggcatcc	44	30	2
348758	Coding	4	896	cacatatcaccaagcaaatg	5	31	2
348759	Coding	4	901	tccccacatatcaccaagc	37	32	2
348760	Coding	4	911	gtccaaaatctaccccacat	58	33	2
348761	Coding	4	916	gatttgtccaaaatctaccc	41	34	2
348762	Coding	4	921	gtacagatttgtccaaaatc	84	35	2
348763	Coding	4	966	agtaacatctatgtttggtt	84	36	2
348764	Coding	4	971	gcatacagtaacatctatgtt	75	37	2
348765	Coding	4	1009	tgaatattctctgtgcatcc	76	38	2
348766	Coding	4	1034	gatacaaagaacttctcggc	25	39	2
348767	Coding	4	1068	ccagaatccttgagtcatat	52	40	2
348768	Coding	4	1164	cataaggatcctgaagtcgc	31	41	2
348769	Coding	4	1173	ctttgtgcacataaggatcc	51	42	2
348770	Coding	4	1319	gcagaaagtgcacatgatttc	74	43	2
348771	Coding	4	1370	tgaaaatcgggtgacagaag	6	44	2
348772	Coding	4	1457	ttctctaactgtaagtaaa	47	45	2
348773	Coding	4	1462	tccacttctctaactgtaa	64	46	2
348774	Coding	4	1475	aagaccatccacctccactt	25	47	2
348775	Coding	4	1517	caccactttttcatccactg	15	48	2
348776	Coding	4	1528	gcttcatctcccaccacttt	47	49	2
348777	Coding	4	1580	tcacagtatgtttcatcatg	53	50	2
348778	Coding	4	1604	gaaacatggaacagagatgc	51	51	2
348779	Coding	4	1610	tcattagaaacatggaacag	40	52	2
348780	Coding	4	1615	agtaatcattagaaacatgg	55	53	2
348781	Coding	4	1621	tgaatgagtaatcattagaa	22	54	2
348782	Coding	4	1626	tcgaatgaatgagtaatcat	65	55	2
348783	Coding	4	1631	taatatcgaatgaatgagta	60	56	2
348784	Coding	4	1636	ttgtgtaatatcgaatgaat	59	57	2
348785	Coding	4	1641	ggctccttgtgtaatatcgaa	69	58	2
348786	Coding	4	1657	actggaattggtaaagggtc	63	59	2
348787	Coding	4	1662	ttgaaactggaattggtaaa	51	60	2
348788	Coding	4	1667	gcttcttgaaactggaattg	76	61	2
348789	Coding	4	1690	catgttttagctgcttgacaa	76	62	2
348790	Coding	4	1716	gatgtcacattttgtgcagag	72	63	2
348791	Coding	4	1721	tttgagatgtcacattttgtg	70	64	2
348792	Coding	4	1742	ttctgtccagcttctgtaga	50	65	2
348793	Coding	4	1960	atcttaggcttatcctcact	43	66	2
348794	Coding	4	1965	agctgatttttaggcttatcc	67	67	2
348795	Coding	4	1970	ccaagagcttagcttttaggct	64	68	2
348796	Coding	4	2026	caacagatgatcggaacagg	63	69	2
348797	Coding	4	2031	atatgcaacagatgatcgga	79	70	2

348798	Coding	4	2048	aagtactgcctcatagcata	70	71	2
348799	Coding	4	2208	ccgggacatcctgatggcct	18	72	2
348800	Stop Codon	4	2511	tagatttttctaaaaggagg	45	73	2
348801	3'UTR	4	2835	tgttttcaacttcagaaatt	41	74	2
348802	3'UTR	4	2927	cttgacagctacaccagttcc	0	75	2
348803	3'UTR	4	2992	aagaaagcatgtcatccttg	62	76	2
348804	3'UTR	4	3038	catcactgtaggcaaatacac	36	77	2
348805	3'UTR	4	3147	agatgttgatcaagcacctt	51	78	2
348806	3'UTR	4	3220	tagaaatgagtttctatcag	18	79	2
348807	3'UTR	4	3325	gctcaaacactgtgagcaaa	39	80	2
348808	3'UTR	4	3369	gttaaattctagcatttattg	0	81	2
348809	Intron	11	2861	ctttttggccctaactatat	38	82	2
348810	Exon	11	6561	acaaacgtaccggtttgctc	4	83	2
348811	Exon	11	9693	gcaaacttacgatttgctct	16	84	2
348812	Intron	11	18253	tatctgaagaaattttataa	5	85	2
348813	Exon	11	20185	gccccactacctaagtcgc	52	86	2
348814	Intron:Exon junction	11	31052	tggtctgcattctgattaaag	31	87	2
348815	Intron	11	34610	cgtgttgaccccatggatga	56	88	2
348816	Intron	11	37526	ttaaatttctagggaatgca	47	89	2
348817	3'UTR	12	1999	ttggctaaatttgcttctgg	55	90	2

As shown in Table 1, SEQ ID NOs 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 26, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 77, 78, 80, 82, 86, 88, 89 and 90 demonstrated at least 36% inhibition of human ACE2 expression in this assay. More preferred are SEQ ID NOs 29, 35, 70 and 36. The target regions to which these preferred sequences are complementary are herein referred to as "preferred target segments" and are therefore preferred for targeting by compounds of the present invention. These preferred target segments are shown in Table 2. These sequences are shown to contain thymine (T) but one of skill in the art will appreciate that thymine (T) is generally replaced by uracil (U) in RNA sequences. The sequences represent the reverse complement of the preferred antisense compounds shown in Table 1. "Target site" indicates the first (5'-most) nucleotide number on the particular target nucleic acid to which the oligonucleotide binds. Also shown in Table 2 is the species in which each of

the preferred target segments was found.

Table 2
Sequence and position of preferred target segments identified
in ACE2.

SITE ID	TARGET SEQ ID NO	TARGET SITE	SEQUENCE	REV COMP OF SEQ ID	ACTIVE IN	SEQ ID NO
261729	4	56	gtctagggaaagtcattcag	14	<i>H. sapiens</i>	91
261730	4	96	aggggacgatgtcaagctct	15	<i>H. sapiens</i>	92
261731	4	116	tcctggctccttctcagcct	16	<i>H. sapiens</i>	93
261733	4	224	tatcaaagttcacttgcttc	18	<i>H. sapiens</i>	94
261734	4	229	aagttcacttgcttcttgga	19	<i>H. sapiens</i>	95
261735	4	234	cacttgcttcttggaattat	20	<i>H. sapiens</i>	96
261736	4	280	ccaaaacatgaataatgctg	21	<i>H. sapiens</i>	97
261737	4	308	tggtctgcctttttaagga	22	<i>H. sapiens</i>	98
261738	4	417	cttcagtgccttcagaagac	23	<i>H. sapiens</i>	99
261739	4	482	tacagtactggaaaagtttg	24	<i>H. sapiens</i>	100
261741	4	606	ggagatctgaggtcggcaag	26	<i>H. sapiens</i>	101
261743	4	743	ggctatgactacagccgcgg	28	<i>H. sapiens</i>	102
261744	4	818	catcttcacgtctatgtgag	29	<i>H. sapiens</i>	103
261745	4	881	ggatgcctccctgctcattt	30	<i>H. sapiens</i>	104
261747	4	901	gcttggtgatatgtggggta	32	<i>H. sapiens</i>	105
261748	4	911	atgtggggtagattttggac	33	<i>H. sapiens</i>	106
261749	4	916	gggtagattttggacaaatc	34	<i>H. sapiens</i>	107
261750	4	921	gattttggacaaatctgtac	35	<i>H. sapiens</i>	108
261751	4	966	aaccaaacatagatgttact	36	<i>H. sapiens</i>	109
261752	4	971	aacatagatgttactgatgc	37	<i>H. sapiens</i>	110
261753	4	1009	ggatgcacagagaatattca	38	<i>H. sapiens</i>	111
261755	4	1068	atatgactcaaggattctgg	40	<i>H. sapiens</i>	112
261757	4	1173	ggatccttatgtgcacaaag	42	<i>H. sapiens</i>	113
261758	4	1319	gaaatcatgtcactttctgc	43	<i>H. sapiens</i>	114
261760	4	1457	tttacttacatgttagagaa	45	<i>H. sapiens</i>	115
261761	4	1462	ttacatgttagagaagtggga	46	<i>H. sapiens</i>	116
261764	4	1528	aaagtgggtgggagatgaagc	49	<i>H. sapiens</i>	117
261765	4	1580	catgatgaaacatactgtga	50	<i>H. sapiens</i>	118
261766	4	1604	gcatctctgttccatgtttc	51	<i>H. sapiens</i>	119
261767	4	1610	ctgttccatgtttctaata	52	<i>H. sapiens</i>	120
261768	4	1615	ccatgtttctaataattact	53	<i>H. sapiens</i>	121
261770	4	1626	atgattactcattcattcga	55	<i>H. sapiens</i>	122
261771	4	1631	tactcattcattcgatatta	56	<i>H. sapiens</i>	123
261772	4	1636	attcattcgatattacacaa	57	<i>H. sapiens</i>	124
261773	4	1641	ttcgatattacacaaggacc	58	<i>H. sapiens</i>	125
261774	4	1657	gaccctttaccaattccagt	59	<i>H. sapiens</i>	126
261775	4	1662	tttaccaattccagtttcaa	60	<i>H. sapiens</i>	127
261776	4	1667	caattccagtttcaagaagc	61	<i>H. sapiens</i>	128
261777	4	1690	ttgtcaagcagctaaacatg	62	<i>H. sapiens</i>	129
261778	4	1716	ctctgcacaaatgtgcacatc	63	<i>H. sapiens</i>	130
261779	4	1721	cacaaatgtgacattctcaa	64	<i>H. sapiens</i>	131
261780	4	1742	tctacagaagctggacagaa	65	<i>H. sapiens</i>	132

261781	4	1960	agtgaggataagcctaaaat	66	<i>H. sapiens</i>	133
261782	4	1965	ggataagcctaaaatcagct	67	<i>H. sapiens</i>	134
261783	4	1970	agcctaaaatcagctcttgg	68	<i>H. sapiens</i>	135
261784	4	2026	cctgttccgatcatctgttg	69	<i>H. sapiens</i>	136
261785	4	2031	tccgatcatctgttgcatat	70	<i>H. sapiens</i>	137
261786	4	2048	tatgctatgaggcagtactt	71	<i>H. sapiens</i>	138
261788	4	2511	cctccttttagaaaaatcta	73	<i>H. sapiens</i>	139
261789	4	2835	aatttctgaagttgaaaaca	74	<i>H. sapiens</i>	140
261791	4	2992	caaggatgacatgctttctt	76	<i>H. sapiens</i>	141
261792	4	3038	gtgatttgcctacagtgatg	77	<i>H. sapiens</i>	142
261793	4	3147	aagggtgcttgatcaacatct	78	<i>H. sapiens</i>	143
261795	4	3325	tttgctcacagtgtttgagc	80	<i>H. sapiens</i>	144
261797	11	2861	atatagtttagggccaaaaag	82	<i>H. sapiens</i>	145
261801	11	20185	gcgacttcaggtagtggggc	86	<i>H. sapiens</i>	146
261803	11	34610	tcattccatgggtgcaacacg	88	<i>H. sapiens</i>	147
261804	11	37526	tgcattccctagaaatttaa	89	<i>H. sapiens</i>	148
261805	12	1999	ccagaagcaaatttagccaa	90	<i>H. sapiens</i>	149

As these "preferred target segments" have been found by experimentation to be open to, and accessible for, hybridization with the antisense compounds of the present invention, one of skill in the art will recognize or be able to ascertain, using no more than routine experimentation, further embodiments of the invention that encompass other compounds that specifically hybridize to these preferred target segments and consequently inhibit the expression of ACE2.

According to the present invention, antisense compounds include antisense oligomeric compounds, antisense oligonucleotides, ribozymes, external guide sequence (EGS) oligonucleotides, alternate splicers, primers, probes, and other short oligomeric compounds which hybridize to at least a portion of the target nucleic acid.

Example 16

Western blot analysis of ACE2 protein levels

Western blot analysis (immunoblot analysis) is carried

out using standard methods. Cells are harvested 16-20 h after oligonucleotide treatment, washed once with PBS, suspended in Laemmli buffer (100 ul/well), boiled for 5 minutes and loaded on a 16% SDS-PAGE gel. Gels are run for 1.5 hours at 150 V, and transferred to membrane for western blotting. Appropriate primary antibody directed to ACE2 is used, with a radiolabeled or fluorescently labeled secondary antibody directed against the primary antibody species. Bands are visualized using a PHOSPHORIMAGER™ (Molecular Dynamics, Sunnyvale CA).

Example 17

Antisense inhibition of ACE2 by chimeric phosphorothioate oligonucleotides having 2'-MOE wings and a deoxy gap: dose response studies in Vero C1008 cells

In a further embodiment of the present invention, five oligonucleotides were selected for additional dose-response studies. Vero C1008 cells, plated in 96-well plates at a density of 8,000 cells per well, were treated with 11, 33, 100 and 300 nM of ISIS 348751, 348756, 348762, 348763, 348797 and the scrambled control oligo ISIS 129691 (ATGCATACTACGAAAGGCCG, SEQ ID: 150). ISIS 129691 is 20 nucleotides in length, composed of a central "gap" region consisting of ten 2'-deoxynucleotides, which is flanked on both sides (5' and 3' directions) by five-nucleotide "wings", composed of 2'-methoxyethyl (2'-MOE) nucleotides. The internucleoside (backbone) linkages are phosphorothioate (P=S) throughout the oligonucleotide, and all cytidine residues are 5-methylcytidines. mRNA levels were measured 24 hours after oligonucleotide treatment as described in other examples herein. Untreated cells served as the control to which the data were normalized.

Results of these studies are shown in Table 3. Data are

averages from three experiments and are expressed as percent of untreated control.

Table 3
Inhibition of ACE2 mRNA expression in Vero C1008 Cells 24 Hr
after Oligonucleotide Treatment

ISIS #	SEQ ID NO	% Control			
		Dose of oligonucleotide			
		11 nM	33 nM	100 nM	300 nM
348751	24	82	58	27	10
348756	29	89	66	33	14
348762	35	76	37	20	10
348763	36	75	50	25	16
348797	70	75	45	24	19
129686	150	105	105	95	114

As shown in Table 3, ISIS 348751, 348756, 348762, 348763, and 348797 were effective at reducing ACE2 mRNA levels in a dose-dependent manner.

Example 18

Antisense inhibition of ACE2 by chimeric phosphorothioate oligonucleotides having 2'-MOE wings and a deoxy gap: dose response studies in CaCo-2 cells

In a further embodiment of the present invention, five oligonucleotides were selected for additional dose-response studies. CaCo-2 cells, plated in 96-well plates at a density of 5,000 cells per well, were treated with 1.6, 8, 40 and 200 nM of ISIS 348751, 348756, 348762, 348763, 348797 and the scrambled control oligo ISIS 129691, and mRNA levels were measured 24 hours after oligonucleotide treatment as described in other examples herein. Untreated cells served as the control to which the data were normalized.

Results of these studies are shown in Table 4. Data are

averages from three experiments and are expressed as percent of untreated control.

Table 4
Inhibition of ACE2 mRNA expression in CaCo-2 Cells 24 Hr
after Oligonucleotide Treatment

ISIS #	SEQ ID NO	% Control			
		Dose of oligonucleotide			
		1.6 nM	8 nM	40 nM	200 nM
348751	24	74	64	35	14
348756	29	88	72	40	18
348762	35	89	60	33	20
348763	36	90	61	36	16
348797	70	101	59	39	18
129686	150	90	102	85	93

As shown in Table 4, ISIS 348751, 348756, 348762, 348763, and 348797 were effective at reducing ACE2 mRNA levels in a dose-dependent manner.